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A

SHORT INQUIRY

INTO THE

POLICY, HUMANITY AND PAST EFFECTS

OF THE

POOR LAWS;

AND INTO THE

PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH ANY MEASURES FOR THEIR IMPROVEMENT SHOULD BE CONDUCTED;

IN WHICH ARE INCLUDED

A FEW CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

QUESTIONS OF POLITICAL ŒCONOMY,

MOST INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH THE SUBJECT;

PARTICULARLY ON THE

SUPPLY OF FOOD

IN

England.

BY ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE PEACE FOR THREE INLAND COUNTIES.

"Æquè et pauperibus prodest, locupletibus æquè."

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

THE following Short Inquiry is an humble attempt to awaken the attention of the public to a very important subject; in which every individual is most deeply concerned; though its consideration has been hitherto too much confined to the particular departments of law, and political œconomy.

An endeavour has been made to treat it in a manner, that will convey general information, and enable every man of sound sense, and liberal education, to form a fair estimate of the expediency, or inexpediency of a system, which has been hitherto upheld in some measure by the respect due to its origin and antiquity; which has been found to produce some inconvenience; and which it is now high time should either be entirely got rid of, or finally settled upon known and fixed principles.

Though a very decided part has certainly been taken upon the question, according to the strong conviction of the author's mind; should the arguments which have convinced him, be deficient in producing that effect on the minds of others; they are referred to writers who inculcate a different system of policy, and offer remedies founded upon opposite principles.

The book is by no means presented to the public as a perfect work: not that the author has had the presumption to lay it before them, without bestowing a reasonable degree of pains on its construction; and rendering it capable (as far as in him lay) of attaining one great object of his wishes: viz. as extensive a circulation as possible among the judicious and well-educated part of the community; — convinced that a very general knowledge of the real state of the case, must precede any effectual steps for its amelioration. The following pages must however be considered as a mere outline; for in truth, *a full consideration* of all the great political questions, which have a bearing upon the subject; would fill as many volumes as there are chapters in this. It is from this diffusedness of the subject perhaps, joined

to the intricacy arising from the relative share each particular question should be allowed to have, in determining the general expediency of the Poor Laws; that so little has yet been written upon that expediency; or upon the general political effects they have hitherto produced. That little too is entirely on one side, and as it is humbly conceived, founded upon principles, which, though professed to be of general application, are extremely confined both in that respect, and in their origin.

The author is far from imagining that he has perfectly succeeded in an attempt, in which so many others may have failed; or which they may have declined from a sense of its difficulty. His utmost ambition is so to have stated the principal arguments, which produced conviction in his own mind, as to rouse the attention of others, who have greater abilities and information than a private country gentleman can pretend to; and to induce them to turn the force of their superior talents, to the investigation of a most interesting subject; which he is firmly persuaded is very closely interwoven with the welfare and existence of his country.

Neither does he make the slightest pretensions, to any new or important discoveries in political œconomy. Those, who have made that department of science their particular study, will very possibly find themselves not unacquainted with the substance of some of his arguments, though their application may not perhaps have occurred before. But let them recollect, that few who are engaged in the active scenes of life, and upon whose minds it is necessary to produce conviction, before any public measure can be generally countenanced, have leisure or inclination to ascend into the higher paths of analytical reasoning. The same arguments therefore may be new to them, and very necessary in a work intended for general perusal; which would be misplaced, because entirely superfluous, in one intended for the exclusive contemplation of the studious.

With respect to the style of the composition, it becomes the author to say little. His pursuits in life are not favourable to the attainment of elegant writing; nor is the subject capable of much embellishment. In the statement of opinions, which may possibly be controverted, it has been likewise often found

necessary to guard his meaning against mistake, by inserting more members into a sentence, and drawing the periods to a greater length, than the strict rules of modern composition may allow. But he has endeavoured upon the whole to provide, that the reader's attention shall be as little fatigued, as the nature of the subject (in many parts necessarily dry) would admit. Should this endeavour not have succeeded to his wish, he must only request his readers to recollect the interesting nature of the end proposed; and to let that supply, in their estimation, all minor deficiencies in the means employed.

It has been found necessary, consistently with the opinions advanced in the course of the work, to differ materially from those contained in an Essay on the Principle of Population, published about three years ago *. The author of that very ingenious and useful work is nevertheless entreated to believe, that the highest respect is entertained, both for the intentions, and ability, with which he has performed his

* By the Reverend Mr. Malthus, Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge.

task. His general principles seem just, and their application in many cases might no doubt be extremely beneficial. They are moreover fortified and illustrated with such a body of useful and entertaining information, applicable to the purposes of the political œconomist in all ages*; that it would be no presumption to expect his book to continue one of the most highly valued in that important department of science, long after the more ephemeral productions of those, who differ with him on detached points of practice, are neglected and forgotten.

That his system would lead a country under certain circumstances, from a state of nature to a higher degree of morality and happiness, than has ever yet existed in the world, seems not improbable. And if the application of it to this country is resisted, it is only because, in the estimation of the author of this Inquiry, England has already advanced so far in an artificial system of society, and its existence so much depends

* Considerable use has been made of the information contained in Mr. Malthus's Essay in the following work; for which the author cannot but feel very grateful.

upon a continuance of that system; that any attempt to alter it, according to the principles laid down in the Essay, must immediately produce greater evils, than could be compensated even by the full enjoyment of those advantages, of which such attempt would only hold out a distant prospect.

With respect to the manner in which this difference of opinion has been conducted; the author of the Essay has given too many proofs of the manly sincerity, and benevolent intentions with which he wrote, to be offended at the freedom, which should always reign in discussions, having no other object than the discovery of truth: and which no writer, whose heart is strongly interested in his subject, can well avoid, in stating arguments essential to the full impression of his opinions on the minds of his readers: particularly when those opinions are, in his judgment, calculated to promote the happiness, and best interests of his fellow-creatures.

At all events the author of this Inquiry is free to declare, that he has taken no liberty with the arguments of others, which he does

not invite, and entreat them to use with his: not with any overweening confidence, that they can (generally speaking) stand the test of a very rigid scrutiny: but with a most sincere and ardent wish, that in an Inquiry, in which the happiness, and welfare of the community is so deeply involved, the whole truth may be discovered; that the system of the Poor Laws may be either firmly established upon practicable principles, or finally rejected. And if he knows his own mind, he would be more flattered by the establishment of a truth beneficial to his country, arising from the discovery of mistakes in his arguments; than from any praise the execution of the work may be thought to deserve.

The first chapter is a statement of the subject: the two next, relate to the policy of the Poor Laws, as it can be discovered by reasoning, and actual experience. The two, which follow, contain considerations on the humane and moral tendency of the laws; and their effects upon the industry and happiness of the subjects upon whom they operate. The sixth and eighth have reference to the means, by which the laws become effectual; that is, to the money raised and expended

for the purposes for which they were enacted. The seventh chapter is a digression upon the supply of food in England; which it is hoped will be thought justifiable, on the ground of its close connexion with the situation and comforts of the poor, and with all the means that can be devised, to increase those comforts.

Throughout the whole work, the outline of various improvements has been suggested. Every endeavour has been made to arrange them with a view to the principles and policy laid down and recommended: as well as to that degree of practicable facility, which is always to be expected in measures calculated for general operation. They are the result of some experience, and much consideration; but their precise nature and regulations, (as far as room permitted their detail,) are not presumed to be either the best that can be discovered; or in every respect so calculated to eradicate the existing inconveniences, as a well-wisher to his country would desire. In fact, the state of society in England is so complex, that it is impossible to point out any measure of national policy not liable to some plausible objections.

The suggestions however, such as they are, are presented to the reader, as evidently of a nature to be instrumental in remedying what is defective, without introducing, as far as can be perceived, any serious evils in its room. He is requested, in the consideration he may be disposed to give them, to bear in mind the following observations of a quaint, but acute, and ingenious writer*. "Nothing in this world can be framed so entirely perfect, but it will have in it some imperfections; I would wish men, in the works of others, to examine two things before they judge: whether there be more of what is good, than of what is ill, in what they examine? And whether they themselves could at first have done it better? To espy the inconveniences of a house when built, is easy; but to lay the plan well at first, is matter of more *pate*, and speaks the praise of a good contriver."

* Owen Felltham's "Resolves."

ADVERTISEMENT.

SHOULD the outlines traced in the following Work be thought by the Public deserving of attention, it is the Author's resolution not to stop here, in his attempts to elucidate the subjects therein considered. Those therefore, who have turned their inquiries that way, are respectfully invited to transmit to him any observations, accompanied with facts, that may tend either to confirm or impugn any part of his opinions.

Such communications addressed to A. J. P. at Mr. Hatchard's, Bookseller, No. 190, *Piccadilly, will be thankfully received, and duly noticed upon a future occasion.*

SINCE this Work has been printed off, a Treatise on Indigence, &c. has appeared, from the pen of Mr. Colquhoun, an able, and experienced magistrate of the metropolis. It contains a variety of valuable detail, upon the relief, employment, and instruction of the poor; subjects which are briefly treated of in the fourth and fifth chapters of the following Inquiry. The author cannot but feel much satisfaction, at finding a great coincidence of opinion between Mr. Colquhoun, and himself, as to *the nature* of the measures, necessary to place those three important offices of the Poor Laws upon their proper footing. Any difference of opinion, which may exist between them, as to the *specific regulations*, by which those measures may be made efficient, or the extent to which they should be carried, probably arises out of the bias their minds have received, from the different medium, through which they have imbibed their ideas upon the subject.

Mr. Colquhoun is in the daily practice of his profession, among the poor of the metropolis, the sink of the idleness, and misery, and the head-quarters of the profligacy, and criminality of the three kingdoms: whereas

the author of the following Inquiry is chiefly conversant with the poor of counties, where no extraordinary profligacy, or temptation to vice exists. The recommendations of both may therefore not be inapplicable to their several scenes of action.

Should this Inquiry by any chance fall into the hands of those, who have not seen Mr. Colquhoun's Treatise, the author strongly recommends it to their perusal, as containing a very enlarged dissertation on the subjects treated of in the fourth and fifth chapters of this Inquiry; and many plans that may probably be of use in the metropolis and large towns; whose full population evidently requires regulations, essentially different from those applicable to the thinner population of the country.

With respect to the general principles of policy, upon which the Poor Laws rest, and the questions immediately arising out of them, to the elucidation of which the greater part of the following work is devoted; the author feels the less regret at differing from Mr. Colquhoun, in almost all the little he has advanced upon that part of the subject, as he mentions it but slightly, and does not seem to have turned his active mind towards it with any great degree of attention.

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ERRATA.

P. 167. line 22. for " strog" read " *strong*."

P. 122. line 6. for " 4,234,000*l*." read " 4,269,000*l*." Mr. Rose states the latter sum; and though the author took the former from the returns made to Parliament 9th May 1804, he has such confidence in the accuracy of Mr. Rose with respect to figures, that he is willing to suppose, there are just grounds for stating the latter sum as the real amount. Perhaps the deficient returns may have been afterwards received, and found to contain sums exceeding the estimated deficiency, stated in the original return.

P. 225. line 8. for " therefore in the rapid" read " *therefore the rapid*."

P. 273. note, line 11. for " of acres" read " *acres*."

P. 329. line 6. add after the word " farmer," the words " *on my own land*."

A

SHORT INQUIRY,

&c.

CHAPTER I.

STATEMENT OF THE SUBJECT.

§ 1. The great and growing evils arising out of the system of the Poor Laws, have of late years been a very general theme of regret, reprobation, and complaint, both in conversation and writing; and it must be confessed, with some appearance of reason. Returns, collected for the most part with great care, and deserving of the highest praise, have been presented to the House of Commons, certifying a very large gradual increase, within the last thirty years, in the amount of the sums levied upon the public, under the provisions of those laws; and other documents have clearly ascertained, what is obvious to the understanding of every man,

who considers for a moment the proofs existing of our increased population, that the number of persons receiving relief is likewise very much enlarged.

§ 2. It is certainly natural, that men not perfectly acquainted with the detailed application of the sums raised, and the state of the people for whose benefit they are applied, nor aware of the real causes of so great and rapid an increase, should suppose that it can only have arisen from enormous abuses: nor is it extraordinary, that an idea should, in consequence, be entertained, that a great proportion of the lower orders, finding they can procure subsistence without working for it, have thrown themselves on their more industrious brethren for support; and that the magistrates, whose duty it is to see that none are relieved from the public purse, but those who are either incapable of labour, or, if capable, unable, by their utmost efforts, to support themselves and their families, have been miserably deficient and inattentive in the execution of this duty. From such suppositions it is equally natural, that men, not reflecting very deeply on the advantages their country has hitherto reaped, and is

still likely to receive from the Poor Laws, should arrive at this conclusion; that since the amount of the sums raised in virtue of them is become an intolerable burden, tending to check industry; and the application of those sums an intolerable abuse, acting only as a premium to idleness; the whole system is altogether unworthy of being entertained; and every true lover of his country is bound to use all possible methods, consistent with the public safety, to get rid of it entirely.

§ 3. To these objections others have been added very lately, by men of deeper reflection and more extensive argument; who profess to deduce their reasons from general and obvious principles, with respect to the relative population and produce of the world;—

> "Whose observation, with extensive view *,
> Surveys mankind from China to Peru:"

these persons, having, in the course of their speculations (by applying, as it is humbly conceived, general principles to partial opera-

* See Mr. Malthus's animated description of the several nations of the world, in his Essay on Population.

tions), laid down as an axiom, the impossibility of supporting a larger number of people, than the territory they inhabit bears food to maintain, thereby arrive at a conclusion with respect to the evil tendency of the Poor Laws in England, on the ground, that they are calculated to increase the number of people, without increasing the supply of food for their support; and that this inequality between food and population is the parent of all sorts of vice and misery.

§ 4. These last, it will be observed, object to the *principles of policy*, on which the laws were originally founded, as well as to their tendency in point of morals and humanity; and of course must be understood to assert, that they have never had a beneficial effect; or rather, that the sum of the good has been far outbalanced by the evils they have produced; while the former objections attach only to the perversions and abuses said to be introduced during the lapse of ages; but at the same time seem to assert, that they are so inveterate and interwoven in the system, that, not being capable of separation from it, the whole should be abolished together.

§ 5. However respectable the authority may be which supports either of these opinions, it will not, it is hoped, be deemed presumptuous in one, by no means unacquainted with the detailed execution of these laws, and who has bestowed much anxious thought on their general principles, and particular effects upon the welfare and prosperity of the country, to give his reasons for entertaining an entire dissent from both opinions; and as complete a conviction, that the sum of good produced by the Poor Laws, has outweighed an hundred fold any little inconveniences which may have accompanied them; that they are no evil, political or moral, but quite the contrary; being founded in principles of true policy, and peculiarly adapted to forward, and facilitate the best interests of the state; and that the gradual increase in the sums raised, and the number of people relieved under them, arises almost entirely from the great and growing prosperity they have been instrumental in producing; and bears no higher proportion to the sum total of the produce of the land and labour of the community, than it has done since the first commencement of that prosperity.

§ 6. At the same time, it is not meant to deny, on the contrary, a hope is entertained to establish, that many improvements might be made, calculated to reduce the proportion which the sum levied actually bears to the public wealth; to render it more effectual in attaining the proposed end, and to lighten the burden which may remain, by sharing it more equally among the mass of those benefited by the system: for though it cannot be justly contended to be a great and growing *evil* as to the *community in general*; neither perhaps can it be denied to be a great and growing *burden* on one particular part of it.

§ 7. In the execution of this important task, it will be the author's duty, first, to go into a general detail of the principles of policy, on which such an institution as the Poor Laws may be supposed to rest in theory; which can only be done by an attentive consideration of its probable effects on population, and of the operation those effects are calculated to have on the state of society in general: next, to follow the effects of those principles in practice, by an inquiry, how far their application has operated advantageously, or otherwise, on the state of England in particular; which can

only be made by a retrospective view of its advancement or decline, since the establishment of those laws; pointing out by the way, the share they are supposed to have had in its condition. But, as the Poor Laws do certainly rest upon principles of humanity, as well as policy, a third inquiry becomes necessary, before a just opinion can be formed of their general expediency; namely, how far they are really calculated, or may be rendered capable by improvement, to make that part of the community, which is the object of them, more industrious and moral, and consequently more happy.

§ 8. If the fair result of these inquiries should fail of producing a conviction, that the laws, both in principle and practice, in policy and humanity, are calculated to produce beneficial consequences; at least, if the reader is convinced of the contrary; he will but lose his time by proceeding further to those measures recommended for the purpose of improving and confirming a system, which he thinks bad and pernicious in itself; it is but time and labour thrown away, to bestow them on piecing a rotten plank: he will therefore act a wiser and a more manly

part, at once to range himself with those who wish for an abolition; and, notwithstanding the opinion of the great orator of antiquity, who might be justified in writing to his friend, "Neque enim ulla lex est, quæ non ipsa se sepiat difficultate abrogationis;" and though this difficulty is peculiarly apparent with respect to the Poor Laws; yet there is no fear, but that, in this enlightened country, those arguments, where truth and true policy are to be found, will ultimately prevail in the minds of its inhabitants.

§ 9. If, on the contrary; he should be inclined to agree in the general expediency of the laws themselves, let him throw aside all prejudice in favour of regulations and political notions, formed under opposite circumstances, and adapted to a different state of society; let him proceed with an unbiassed mind, coolly to consider the means which are, with the greatest deference, submitted to him, as calculated to secure the continuance, and increase the value of the advantages already gained: he will, it is hoped, in due time be convinced, that this end can only be attained by a fair and equal distribution of the charge necessary to pro-

cure the benefit among those who enjoy its advantages; and that even this will not be sufficient, without a constant and anxious superintendance, to provide against the irregularities which may be supposed naturally incident to so complex a system, and continual pains to make the most of the resources provided for its support.

"Nil sine magno
"Vita labore dedit mortalibus."

CHAPTER II.

ON THE GENERAL POLICY OF SUCH AN INSTITUTION AS THE POOR LAWS.

§ 1. It is a little singular that the operation of the Poor Laws upon population, which, as we have seen in the last chapter, is the quality in them most objected to on the ground of policy, should be that which will be here adduced as one of their chief recommendations. The statesmen and philosophers of this nation, from the time it first began to emerge from darkness and despotism, to open its eyes to its true interests, and to appreciate its capabilities of pursuing them, have universally inculcated this maxim; that a more meritorious act could not be performed towards the state, than the rearing, or contributing to rear, an effective man to that age, at which he might begin to be actively employed in some useful occupation. This maxim has, indeed, been so universally allowed, that its truth has been considered as granted; and if, in any undertaking, the

object in view was to encourage population, a claim was supposed to be established to public gratitude. Among others, it is satisfactory to cite the great names of Bacon and Locke, as authorities for this opinion; for as none were more intimately acquainted with the unexplored resources of their country, it is a convincing proof, that they thought a numerous population one of the surest instruments in drawing them forth.

§ 2. Since, however, other opinions have been started, reversing this order of proceeding; and inculcating the precept, that to make the food of a country, in all cases, the standard by which to regulate its quantum of population, is a surer road to national prosperity, than the old method of using population as the instrument to produce resources, without any reference to the quantity of food raised on the land; and since it is farther advanced, that population has a constant tendency to exceed the supply of food for its support; the conclusion seems to be, that instead of encouraging, all possible means should be used to check and control it. This opinion is believed to have been first

stated to the world *, in its present shape, by an ingenious traveller, in consequence of

* Mr. Malthus states, in the preface to his 4to. edition, 1803, of the Essay on Population, that the subject had been treated by the economists, Montesquieu, Dr. Franklin, Sir James Stuart, Mr. Arthur Young, and Mr. Townshend; it will, probably, not be denied that the notice taken of it by all but the latter, is comparatively cursory and incidental; whereas Mr. Townshend, in vol. iii. p. 107, of his Travels through Spain, published in 1792, observing upon a village in that country, seated in a deep and small valley, has the following passage: "Looking down upon so rich, yet such a contracted spot, we instantly and evidently see, that the human race (however at first, and whilst their numbers are limited, they may rejoice in affluence) will go on constantly increasing, till they balance their quantity of food: from that period, two appetites will combine to regulate their numbers. Beyond that period, should they continue to increase, having passed the natural limits of their population, they must suffer want. In these circumstances, beholding many of the poor naked and half starved, should they inadvertently ordain, that no one in their community should want, that all should have food, and every man an habitation; is it not obvious, that they would aim at impossibilities? and that by every effort to relieve distress, they would extend the bounds of human misery?" Here are, in few words, the general outlines of the Essay on Population, and its application to the Poor Laws, drawn from the observation of a little village in the mountains of a declining country. The difference is, that Mr. Townshend reasons generally from a few insulated facts; whereas Mr. Malthus applies to detached and different subjects, the general principles so established. In other places Mr. Townshend resumes

what fell under his observation in his journey through a country, that has been gradually sinking, for two centuries, from the height of prosperity to abject and deplorable wretchedness; the consequence of mistaken policy in a despotic government; where of course (as it is situated in a genial climate) the resources for the support and employment of men have decayed and diminished faster than the men themselves. It would probably, however, have never made a deep impression on the world, had it not very lately been enlarged into a regular system professed to be founded on the general principles alluded to in the last chapter, and to be applicable to all states of society, by an author, who to consummate skill and ingenuity in the art of reasoning, and very extensive general knowledge, has added five years application to the professed purpose of illustrating this subject *.

the subject; and particularly enters into the same sort of calculations, drawn from births, deaths, and marriages, which we find in the Essay. Mr. M. very fairly refers his readers to Mr. Townshend's work; and the sole object of this quotation is to shew what is conceived to be the origin of the system in its present state.

* It is impossible not to feel great astonishment at finding in a work, so evidently the production of a liberal

§ 3. Any dissent from opinions advanced on such authority, must of course be en-

and enlightened mind, and in many parts elegant in its style, a passage descending so near to what may be called vulgar prejudice, as the following (p. 412, 4to. ed.): "The tyranny of justices, churchwardens, and overseers, is a common complaint among the poor: but the fault does not lie *so much* in these persons, who, *probably, before they were in power, were not worse than other people,* but in the nature of all such institutions." This admission of the justice of the complaint of the poor, as far as relates to the magistracy of England, a set of men, containing almost every respectable landed proprietor, and who can have no possible motive for the sacrifice of their time and leisure in the performance of the most irksome offices, except the good of their country, must surely have arisen from a lapse of the pen, not to be expected in so laboured a performance. Of the justice of that part of the complaint not a shadow of proof has been, or, generally speaking, can be given. Indeed the necessity for new regulations in the Poor Laws, has arisen, in some measure, from the mistaken indulgence of magistrates, springing, not from a spirit of tyranny, but of love and pity towards their fellow-subjects. Almost every bench of magistrates will afford an instance of the truth of this observation, greatly to the regret of those, who are convinced, that it is more humane to execute the laws strictly against one vagrant, than to permit the example of his impunity to tempt twenty other well-behaved persons, into the commission of the same offence.

Dr. Adam Smith, when he thought proper to expatiate on the tendency of certain establishments in the Universities, to encourage idleness, did not write; "The idleness of

tertained with some diffidence; but as the application of them, as far as relates to the subject of this book, is of the last importance to the public good; it becomes the duty of the author, who cannot avoid feeling such dissent, to state the grounds of it as briefly and impartially as he can. It is, indeed, absolutely necessary (previous to forming any opinion on the policy of the Poor Laws), to inquire how far each system is calculated to promote national prosperity; because if it be good to check population, and those laws

fellows of colleges, scouts, and bedmakers, is a common complaint at Oxford and Cambridge; but the fault does not *so much lie in these persons, who probably, before they got into* those births, *were not worse* than other people;* but he contented himself with giving what he esteemed satisfactory reasons to ascertain the justice of his remark; of the fallacy of which the laborious and useful work in question* must be acknowledged to be a signal proof. But the arguments used to establish the tyranny of magistrates seem truly curious. It is asserted, that any great *interference* with the concerns of other people *is tyranny*; the magistrates are bound, by the Poor Laws, to *interfere* in several instances, in seeing that justice is performed between the poor and the public; *therefore* complaints against their *tyranny* are allowed to be just, and they are admitted on this account to be *worse* than *other people.*

* Mr. Malthus is stated in his title-page to be a fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge.

encourage it, undoubtediy they must be impolitic.

§ 4. The general principles laid down in the work alluded to, which may fairly be considered as containing all that can be said on that side of the subject, are simple and incontrovertible. First, that, taking the world throughout, it cannot contain more people than it can bear food to support. Secondly, that population has a constant tendency to increase beyond those means of subsistence; or, in other words, that men, who have food at hand, are impelled by nature to propagate their species; and that the consequent increase of men naturally proceeds so much faster than any possible supply of food, that the level between the food and people, unless *artificially* preserved, can only be adjusted by the extinction of the latter; which must, of course, be produced by all kinds of misery. That laws, therefore, should take care, by introducing artificial checks to population, to prevent the miseries introduced by the operation of nature in the case; and that no fear need be entertained of carrying these checks too far, since the principle of increase will

always be sufficiently strong to take care of that side of the balance.

§ 5. Now there cannot be a doubt, that, as far as relates to the world in general, this is perfectly true; but as we know of no legislator for the whole world, except Divine Providence, we had better, perhaps, leave the management of this affair to the eternal laws of its unerring wisdom. With respect, however, to the application of the argument to any particular country, it may or may not be just, according to the state of society in which that country happens to be. For example, nations in an early stage of society, engaged solely in agriculture and the simple trades connected with it, can never be peopled up to their produce, for this plain reason; that in almost all climates land will produce, even in a very inferior state of cultivation, much more than sufficient to support the cultivators and the simple artisans attached to them; all the best lands not being occupied, the children marry as early as possible, and turn their industry to the further cultivation of the soil. So that, though population would increase very rapidly, it never could overtake the supply of

food, as long as this state of things remained the same*. The system of checks would here, therefore, be entirely vain; or, if efficient, would only have the pernicious tendency of checking national prosperity, by keeping the supply of labour below the demand.

§ 6. But it will be important to pursue this subject a little further, and inquire into the real cause from which the rapid increase of population in this political situation proceeds; as it may, perhaps, lead us to a conclusion applicable to many other states of society; namely, that it is not the supply of food from the soil of any particular country, but the state of its demand for labour, that must unless interfered with by laws, and in good policy generally should, regulate its supply of people.

§ 7. But though laws keeping down the population below the demand for labour, must in all cases be impolitic, yet we may

* The present situation of the North American United States will occur to every one as a strong illustration of these observations.

perhaps find a country, in such a peculiar situation as to its probable views of future prosperity; and a state of society may be supposed to exist; where it would be good policy to encourage population, beyond the amount which the actual demand for labour, and the consequent price of it in wages, would produce.

§ 8. To proceed then; there must always be in an agricultural country, whose best lands are not yet fully cultivated, a large surplus produce of food to be disposed of; which, to increase the landholder's capital, and to settle his children on newly-cleared farms, must be sold; there will be few buyers at home, because they are chiefly growers and sellers; the corn then must be exported. But exportation of the produce being the object of its growth, agriculture can here be considered only as a manufacture, and land as the raw material; the excellence of which, and the ease with which it is acquired, render the manufacture the most profitable and increasing that can be engaged in. A profitable and increasing manufacture must always produce a great demand for

labour, and consequent high wages *. This is the inducement to the lower orders to marry early, by securing plenty to themselves, and a fair prospect of providing well for their children. But it is not because the demand happens to be for labour to be bestowed in raising food, that people marry early, and population advances rapidly; for were good trades to be had in commercial countries, as easily as good farms in this, the profits of employment being equal in both, the demand for labour, and consequent en-

* By wages is here meant, not the nominal amount in money, but the real reward of labour; that is, the quantity of provisions they will purchase; more or less of which will accrue to the labourer, in proportion to the demand for his labour; since the sum of money given for wages will always have respect to the price of provisions. The dearness or cheapness of these last will not at all affect the question, of the labourer's relative power to rear a family according to the demand for his labour. In different commercial countries the price of provisions will not, probably, differ materially, except in times of scarcity; nor can they ever be very low in such countries; for commerce having a tendency to increase the sum of money necessary to carry on cultivation, the cultivator must of course raise the price of his production; or, if he is prevented doing so by artificial means, will not cultivate till the demand for produce, and its consequent increase of price, make it worth his while.

couragement to the increase of men, would be equal too; since, as (Poor Laws out of the question) the surplus food is not distributed gratis to the inhabitants, they have, in both instances, their wages only to look to for subsistence.

§ 9. Should an agricultural nation, instead of corn, raise nothing from its soil but hemp and flax, the case as to population would not be altered at all*, provided those articles could be grown and exported as profitably as corn; and corn enough to feed the people imported as cheap as it could be raised; for

* It would, evidently, be a gross mistake to assert, that in a country where corn and provisions were plentiful, a labourer would be able to purchase so much more of them with his wages. Such an assertion would be a confounding (or rather absolute forgetfulness of the difference between) the real and the money price of labour; because it takes for granted, that in two countries, where the demand for labour is equal, though provisions are dear in one, and cheap in the other, yet the money wages of labour would be equal in both; whereas nothing can be more clear than that, in proportion to the demand for labour, the money price of it will be regulated according to the price of provisions: where these are cheap, a shilling a day may be really as high wages, as half-a-crown a day, where they are dear; and the labourer would have an equal capability of rearing a family in both cases.

the profits of trade, and wages of labour, would still continue equally high or low.

§ 10. But as corn has been found to be the most profitable agricultural production, there will always be among a large number of nations, those of Europe and America for instance, several in a situation to export it; either because they have never yet emerged from the agricultural state; as Poland and some parts of North America; or because the violence of revolutions has thrown them back from former grandeur; as other nations which might be named. Now, it is not to be supposed, that Providence would permit this superfluity of the food of man to exist, unless it foresaw, in the fluctuation of human affairs, that other nations would be found in a condition to purchase it with the superfluity of the produce of their labour. These are the manufacturing and commercial nations, whose various demands for men have created a population larger than the actual produce of their soil will feed; and who find that it answers better to them to purchase food with part of the produce of their trade, than to raise it from their land.

§ 11. Upon the policy of permitting this to any extent, where the soil can by any means be made to produce the food at home, more will be said hereafter. Thus much has been thought necessary to shew, that in the situation above supposed, the quantity of corn raised has little connexion with the quantum of population, which is naturally regulated by the demand for men; and as they will, in general, adopt that course of employment for their industry, which is most profitable, and it is the interest of their country that they should do so; any attempt to keep the population below the demand, would generally occasion a loss of profit to the nation, which is all that is here contended for.

§ 12. To expatiate upon the different states of society and civilization, in which Providence has been pleased, at all times, to regulate the several nations of the world; that their mutual wants and superfluities may contribute to their mutual benefit; and to inquire what system could be most advantageously applied to each, would be an endless task; for no two were ever found precisely in the same situation; and if so, no line of policy, however drawn from general

principles, can equally apply to all; what may suit extremely well with a retrograde state of society, may be quite unfit for one that is stationary or advancing; and though, certainly, a few principles may be laid down of so general a nature as to apply universally; such as, to exist as a nation, there must be men—to exist as men, there must be food—they are of a nature so abstract, that an attempt to deduce from them a complicated system of policy, for the purposes of civilized nations, would be as fruitless as it might be dangerous. Of this we may be certain, that any attempt to regulate the population, so as to keep it below the demand for labour, in a country advancing in prosperity, either agricultural or commercial, and surrounded by others in the same career, cannot but have a pernicious effect; since a full supply of labour in both pursuits is essential to their advancement.

§ 13. It may, perhaps, be allowed, that if an island separated from the rest of the world, as much in connexion, as situation, should choose to consider a code of laws, tending to keep the number of people below the supply of food from the soil, "sibi semper numinis instar;" it might attain to great

happiness and prosperity; so long as it continued unconnected, or concerned only with nations in a less advanced state than itself; because, in such case, the rapidity with which it advanced would be of no importance, having nothing to fear from the superior power, which rival nations might acquire by a more enterprising system of policy. It might, therefore, wisely resolve to exchange a portion of expected increase in power, for a degree of additional security from domestic difficulties. It seems too, beyond a doubt, that a country, sinking from prosperity to adversity, must be benefited by any system tending to check its population; because where little or no demand for labour exists, men must be without employment, and consequently a dead weight upon the society. These two appear to be the only supposable cases, to which the system alluded to, can be said to apply exactly.

§ 14. Let us now turn our thoughts to an inquiry, how far it be possible for a state of society to be found, not only requiring, more emphatically than others, a perfect freedom of increase for its population up to the full extent of the demand for labour, without reference to the actual growth of food; but

which may, likewise, find an advantage in having a still further supply of men, always at hand for any purpose that may occur, beyond what the actual demand would have a natural tendency to create.

§ 15. We will suppose a country, situated in a cool climate (where much artificial assistance is necessary to rear the children, and keep the grown people in health, by protecting them from the inclemency of the seasons); exercising a flourishing agriculture, on a considerable extent of territory, in part well cultivated; a great variety of prosperous manufactures; and an extended commerce carried on in its own shipping; with new channels of intercourse constantly opening to its enterprise: that this country is, besides, surrounded by others engaged in pursuit of the same advantages, rivals of its prosperity, eagerly and anxiously watching every occasion of thriving at its expense, and even of annihilating its resources to share the booty among themselves.

§ 16. It will not be denied, that every opportunity lost by such a nation, is one gained by its enemies; and that any measure

tending to throw the least impediment in the way of its operations, is just so far calculated to sink it below its natural level in the scale of society. With respect to trade; should that part of the world, with which it has intercourse, have a call for its manufactures, and ports open for its ships, in a degree to employ more persons in making up the goods and navigating the ships, than its agriculture will supply with food; who would advise it to refuse employing a portion of its capital in answering that call, and encouraging an additional population for that purpose only? Surely none but those who entertain a doubt, whether manufactured produce can strictly be said to form any part of the true riches of a state; an opinion which rests apparently upon this ground; that the object in question being no new production, but merely the modification of an old one, the increase of its value does not naturally tend to increase the funds for the maintenance of labour and population. A fleece, for example, made up into shawls, though it may employ many men, produces no increase in their supply of food, and will not, it is said, enable the state to maintain one more man than before. Now, setting

aside the consideration, that a large proportion of the capital raised by manufactures will, in a country of extensive territory, always be diverted to the cultivation of the earth; it is clear that these shawls would not have been made, unless there had been a demand for them either at home or abroad. A demand for manufactures at home proves the proprietors of land to have still a large surplus produce, to exchange with the manufacturer against his artificial productions, which enables him to feed those employed by him. A large demand from abroad proves the landed proprietors of foreign countries to be in the same situation, and willing to make the same exchange: these manufactures, therefore, clearly increase the funds for the maintenance of labour and population in their own country; since the surplus produce of its land would have been exported, and that of foreign countries not imported, unless it had been wanted to feed the manufacturers; and if these, in the mean time, increase in numbers; pay taxes to support the revenues of the state; contribute their proportion of men for the public defence; lay the foundation of naval strength, by the demand for ships to export their productions;

and add to the general stock of the industry of the community; who shall say that they do not contribute largely to the riches and power of the state?

§ 17. The definition of wealth, therefore, which excludes manufactures, can only apply correctly to countries, which, like China, are cultivated, and already peopled, nearly to their utmost capability of production, and who abhor foreign commerce; where, consequently, additional food, in exchange for other goods, is neither to be had from abroad nor at home.

§ 18. If then, prosperous manufactures be really a solid part of national wealth, and a population equal to the demand for labour absolutely necessary to carry them on, what pretence can remain to those who would still check it, unless the food raised at home is sufficient for its maintenance? It has been said, that by thus making a dependence upon foreign food for support, a kind of subjection is created to the nations who supply that food; the governments of which might, either to gratify their own spleen, or at the command of a superior power, of whom they

stand in awe, stop the supply; and thus introduce much distress and confusion: it has even been said that they might bend a nation to unreasonable compliances by these means. Passing over the improbability, that all the nations exporting corn should, at one time, and with one consent, agree to starve their regular customers, by declining a commerce, in which themselves reap the great profit; this objection applies equally to all dealings whatever with foreign states: every transaction between one state and another depends for its success on their mutual goodwill, secured by the benefits accruing to each; and would never be entered into, if a calculation were to be made at setting out, of the possibility of either party's sacrificing its interests to pique and resentment. In truth, such a calculation would be palpably absurd; since it is founded on a supposition, that a considerable body of men will deliberately lose sight of that great principle of action, self-interest; and be false to one of their strongest natural propensities, the desire of bettering their condition. With respect to prohibitions, experience shews, that in matters of commerce, wherever a demand exists, no power on earth can prevent it from being supplied,

either directly, or through the medium of neutrals *.

§ 19. It is not meant to assert, that this system of importing food from abroad is to be recommended as permanent; but merely that it is not to be refused, if a step in the progress to prosperity can thereby be gained; particularly as it can be shewn plainly enough, that in a country such as we have supposed, (that is,) possessed of an extensive territory, not fully cultivated, the disproportion between the food raised, and the demand for it created by the above-mentioned means, can never be very great; except through the operation of impolitic and unequal taxes.

§ 20. The security of property, the substantial and independent feelings arising from the possession of land, are powerful mo-

* It is probable that difficulties may occur for a time in the regular transmission of corn to the English market from Poland and Prussia, in consequence of the events now passing there (December 1806); but there is little reason to doubt, that by timely notice of the increased demand thus created from other countries exporting corn, they would immediately supply the deficiency.

tives, operating in the breast with such force, that the moment a merchant is possessed of sufficient wealth to insure subsistence to himself and family, the first object of his ambition is the possession of a portion of this more ostensible, and solid species of property; and he is generally willing to pay for the gratification, to the full amount of any difference, that may exist in the profits arising from the two sources of wealth. This feeling may be fairly said to operate as a bounty upon the cultivation of land; a bounty not granted upon the short-sighted views of human policy, but established in the heart of man by the unerring wisdom and goodness of Providence; and acting with such force, as sometimes to counteract the effect of various impolitic burdens, which, in different countries, have been exclusively laid upon the land. So that it appears as consistent with reason, as it will hereafter be seen to be with experience, that in a country of extensive territory, not cultivated to the utmost, nothing but the rapid increase of vexatious and disproportionate burdens upon the land, from which commerce is exempt, can ever keep up a great disproportion be-

tween the commercial population, and the food raised for their support.

§ 21. Having thus, it is hoped, established the position, that a full encouragement to trade and manufactures is not only beneficial, but that it is not likely to be accompanied with evils, great enough to counterbalance the benefits in such a country as has been supposed; we must now proceed to consider the other operations it has to carry on at the same time; that we may be fully impressed with the great necessity it lies under of cultivating to the utmost a full supply of people.

§ 22. And first, its flourishing agriculture; which, as has been shewn, must always bear a certain proportion to the increase of capital created by other means: the new land, therefore, brought into cultivation creates an additional demand for hands, which it is the more important should be fully supplied; because the labour in which they are employed is on objects of prime necessity, that *must* be imported if they are not raised at home.

§ 23. Next, its demand for men in war and foreign settlements; which, as it is surrounded by envious and powerful rivals, must be supposed considerable; this, unless otherwise provided for, must be supplied from the other professions and avocations of life; and, by interfering with them, must impair, in the same degree, the general prosperity.

§ 24. Lastly, the consideration of the new channels of intercourse daily opening to its view; all the advantages of which must be given up, or rather ceded to rivals, unless a sufficient number of men is at hand, to perform the various operations necessary for preparing a supply of articles, to answer the increasing demand.

§ 24*. With these various demands for men, the full supply for each of which is intimately connected with the general welfare of them all; surely a doubt can scarcely remain, that the policy of imposing artificial checks upon population, by laws tending, in all cases, to keep it down to the level of the produce of the land, would tend immediately to the ruin of such a country as

has been supposed, instead of providing for its security; and would be the more absurdly pernicious, because unnecessary to prevent the formation of an useless population; a precaution which has been already provided by nature, and is indeed a condition of the state of society in such a country; where the men would have a natural tendency to impose those checks upon themselves; and would, of their own accord, stop short of that point of increase, which it should ever be the object of laws to prevent.

§ 25. To prove this: extended and increasing manufactures, commerce, and navigation, can never exist without a great spirit of private enterprise: this cannot pervade a nation without perfect security of person and property; which, again, can only be the effect of a high degree of liberty, mental and personal, the parent of all the manly and decent feelings of the mind. In such a political situation men are naturally brought up in the habit of considering certain articles as necessaries, which those, in the same station of life in other countries, may perhaps consider as luxuries; and it is certain, that without peculiar encouragement, they

will never encumber themselves with the burden and expence of a family, till the high price of labour, caused by a short supply of hands, shall put it in their power to procure those articles; and, supposing that to be the case at present, they will cease to form families whenever the supply of hands shall make labour so cheap, as to place those articles decidedly out of their reach.

§ 26. The degree to which this spirit will pervade the lowest orders of the people, will depend in some measure on the climate in which they live; where that is cool, and some of the seasons inclement, a house to live in, warm clothing, and wages high enough to secure a provision for old age, as well as to bring up and support a family of the ordinary size, to the age at which they may begin to earn their own living, must be considered as indispensable preliminaries to marriage; because, if men married without them, they must expose themselves and their families to very great misery; unless indeed some extraneous fund should be provided by the community, to replace any deficiency in other resources. It is not meant to assert, that a few idle and thoughtless persons might not follow the

dictates of their passions, rather than their prudence; but it is clear, that their progeny must be brought up in a continual struggle against want and misery; and, if reared at all, would be beings by no means calculated to enrich their country by labour, or to defend it by their prowess.

§. 27. It appears then, that in such a state of society the system of checks upon population would scarcely be necessary, supposing it to be expedient; but it would besides be highly detrimental, in a point of view different from any in which we have yet contemplated it; inasmuch as it would be only adding to an inconvenience already existing; to counteract the excess of which requires the operation of a directly contrary system to that in question; the inconvenience alluded to is, the high * price of labour; the greatest political evil, and the most to be guarded against (consistently with the public happiness) in a powerful and commercial country.

§ 28. Foreign commerce, and the manufactures depending upon it, can seldom flourish

* The expression "high" is here intended as compared with the price of labour in other countries.

where the whole expence of working up these last is great; for reasons which it is almost needless to repeat to those, who are acquainted with the first principles of political economy; suffice it to say, that though capital and industry may go some way in counteracting superior cheapness of labour, the latter must in the end drive the others out of the market; because it has in itself the seeds of the other two: the same reasoning will apply in a great degree to agriculture and internal trade; for, notwithstanding any duties or prohibitions that may be laid on foreign articles for home consumption, experience proves, that where a great difference of price exists, it is quite impossible to prevent a degree of smuggling, which will considerably interfere with internal trade and manufacture.

§ 29. With a restraining principle, therefore, operating upon the mass of the population, supposing commerce and manufactures to increase at all, it can only be in the slow degree in which a demand for the latter, at a high price, may exist: but should there be any rivals contesting the market, it would be altogether as absurd to expect an

increase of commerce, as it would be to doubt of the ultimate loss of that actually in possession.

§ 30. If then a high price of labour be necessary to encourage population, and a low one to secure such means of employment as can alone render the people useful, we seem to be reduced to this dilemma: that by granting either proposition, the other must apparently be renounced; that unless the increase of people can be encouraged by high wages, and a vent for manufactures secured by low ones; that is, unless this seeming contradiction can be reconciled, the national prosperity must suffer.

§ 31. We must now therefore proceed to inquire, how far the mind of man, ruminating on his country's good, (in a free country that term is happily synonimous with his own,) may not have discovered means, or at least improved those already in existence, to secure both advantages; thereby providing so powerful and inexhaustible an instrument for national enterprise to work with; and at the same time securing such a facility to the vent of its commodities, by

keeping down the price of labour; that the country so favoured should soon leave its rivals far behind in the career of wealth and prosperity, and soar above the feeble efforts of all others not excited by the same powerful impulse.

§ 32. An assertion, that such an institution as the Poor Laws of England would produce this effect, will create some surprise in the minds of those, who have been accustomed never to hear them mentioned, except in terms of reproach. But if men, living in such a country, and under such a constitution as has been supposed, will not marry without the advantages incident to high wages; or if they do, will produce only a race of weak, miserable, ineffective beings; what will be the consequence of a law which says thus to them?—Provide the state with children, if you are inclined to marriage; and should the produce of your industry not be sufficient to rear them in health and vigour, here is a fund that will supply deficiencies; or if the expence of rearing them prevents your making a provision for old age, here is a fund out of which you shall be supported with decency, whenever your infirmities pre-

vent your power of supplying yourselves.—Such a provision must soon counteract any natural impediments to a full supply of people; and if the application of the fund be guarded by wise provisions, securing a man's best exertions while capable; and those provisions are not perverted; the population raised thereby will be of the best sort; it will be robust, healthy, and industrious;

"A bold peasantry, their country's pride,
Which, *once destroy'd, can never be supplied.*"

§ 33. Thus it would clearly encourage an increase of population; but would it at the same time provide against the other side of the dilemma, by keeping down the rate of wages? If the plentiful supply of any article tends to lower its price, undoubtedly the greater number of men there are to bring labour into the market, the lower will its wages be; which is so plain, that it does not require another word to prove it.

§ 34. The money paid, therefore, under the operation of the Poor Laws, or of any system resembling them, may be considered in a great measure as a premium given in

lieu of high wages, at once to encourage population, and enable the manufacturer to work cheap; consequently to find a market for his commodities; thus rendering the country the most commercial, and, by providing a constant supply of active men for any speculations that may open to its views, at the same time the most powerful, in proportion to its natural resources, of the society of nations among which it flourishes.

§ 35. But it may perhaps be asked, what right has the government of any country to oblige a part of its labourers to receive their hire in the shape of alms; the most disgraceful method, and at the same time the most calculated to eradicate honest and independent principles from the mind? The answer is, that there is no force whatever used, or intended, on the occasion. A nation, in want of a great supply of people, must do one of two things; either it must give to every man, whether married or not, wages high enough to support a large family, that he may be encouraged to marry early; or it must hold out the prospect of assistance to those who actually have large families, to any necessary amount, of which the average rate of wages may fall short; for it cannot be

thought possible to pay a labourer wages, not in proportion to the work he does, but to the size of his family. The first of these propositions has already been shewn to be fatal to national prosperity; and if neither be adopted, the population cannot increase; for it is not to be supposed, that in a commercial and manufacturing country, the wages of labour can be more than sufficient to enable every couple to rear two children each on an average; which, supposing all to marry, would only keep the population stationary *. With respect to the individual receiving relief, no injury can be said to be suffered by him who marries, and has a large family, before he has saved from his earnings, while a bachelor, provision to support them; if he receives that provision from the public in any manner most convenient to it. His

* If it be said, that men should wait till they have saved enough from their earnings, to give them a reasonable prospect of supporting a family, before they marry; it is evident that the number (now able to rear families) who would die before they arrived at the age, when this saving can be supposed to be made, would so far reduce the whole number of the married; that very large families indeed would be necessary, even to keep the population up to its present amount.

situation is his own choice; he preferred the comforts of a family, with the chances attending it, to the independence of a single life; and he has this clear advantage over every other rank in the community, that the choice is in his power, unaccompanied with the dreadful alternative of starving, or plunging his wife and family into misery; which cannot but be the consequence of such improvident marriages in the higher walks of life; where the necessity of applying for parish relief would be more feared than death itself. As to the deterioration of his moral qualities, it may be found, that the state is no loser by exchanging the honest independence of the bachelor, for the civil industry of the father of a large family; and, if proper opportunities are afforded for instruction, he will probably be in all respects the more moral man of the two. There does not seem, therefore, to be any objection, in point of justice and morality, to holding out this encouragement.

§ 36. A plausible objection, however, seems to occur in point of policy: it may be asked, where is the gain in providing a fund to be paid to labourers in lieu of wages? The sums raised to supply it will come

equally out of the pockets of the people; and, from the nature of things, must amount to as much as, if given in wages, would produce the same encouragement to population. Very true; but the difference lies here: in the case of wages, the whole goes out of the pocket of the employer; who, to reimburse himself, must of course raise the price of his commodity and hurt its sale: whereas the sums raised to provide this fund, should be levied upon the whole of the community possessing property; they are in fact a tax paid to secure to the public the advantages of a thriving industry; and a drawback allowed to the employer of labour, to enable him to increase his speculations, and to open fresh markets for his commodities by keeping down their price.

§ 37. That this is just reasoning with respect to foreign commerce, seems not to admit of dispute. With regard to internal trade, however, it may be said, that since people of property are the purchasers of manufactures, as well as the payers of the Poor's Rates; what they would have had to pay in the form of additional price on any commodity, is equally paid by them in the shape of Poor's Rates; which, by diminish-

ing their incomes equally, prevents the sale of the goods, as much as if the latter sum were added to the price. Now (setting aside the fact, that the Poor Laws operate in increasing population and lowering wages, in a proportion much greater than the sum actually raised under the rates), it is clear, that this reasoning applies correctly only to manufactures of such general consumption, as to be purchased by every individual who pays to the rates: there are but few articles which come under this description, and even in these the division of the expence makes it lighter, and is certainly an encouragement to their sale.

§ 38. With respect to the consumers of all commodities only partially used, the sum which would be paid exclusively by them, as an addition of price to the article, is in fact paid by the community in the form of Poor's Rates; thus increasing the sale by lowering the price in the market, and adding greatly to the industry and prosperity of the state. Many articles are purchased now, which, if they were three or four shillings dearer, might be refused; and though the purchaser may in fact pay

sixpence or a shilling of those four shillings in the shape of Poor's Rates, the circumstance does not hurt the sale of the article, even in that slight degree, for the reason just given.

§ 39. There is another and most satisfactory manner in which lowering the price in the market operates; and that is, in the case of manufactures consumed by the poor themselves (who pay no rates); since it does in some measure tend to place them in as good a situation as if their wages were higher. If a labourer is able to purchase a coat for two thirds of the price he would pay if wages were one third higher, he is certainly, as far as that expence goes, in as good a situation, and able to wear as good a coat, as if his wages were *in fact* so much higher. The same kind of reasoning will apply to every production or manufacture used by the poor.

§ 40. The chief precautions necessary to be taken in adopting this system of policy, are; first, to divide the tax as fairly as possible among the proprietors of every description, who may all be said to receive equal benefit from

its operation; that no partial burden on any particular species of property may depress it below its natural level in the scale of improvement; and next, to provide that the sum raised upon the community shall not be large enough to encourage a population beyond what it can profitably employ. The proof of this would be, when any number of men, capable of work, should be found to exist in the community, *bonâ fide*, unable to find employment; for then it would be evident, that the encouragement given to matrimony, by the provision held out for rearing children to an effective age, had operated in a ratio greater than the demand of the country for men; then the principle of checks might with good policy be acted upon; but then, in all probability, the evil would check itself; for though a man may be induced to undergo a few hardships in rearing his children to manhood, when he sees by experience they may then certainly gain an independent livelihood; he might nevertheless pause, before he put himself in a situation by marriage, to give life to a family, who would have nothing but the workhouse to look to for subsistence.

§ 41. But as long as the industry of an effective man can be profitably employed, so long will it be the interest of the community to go to the expence of rearing that man to perfection; which if it can do, without materially raising the wages of labour, and thereby diminishing the demand for its goods, population and profitable employment may go on increasing together; and it seems impossible to fix any limit to the number of people, that may advantageously exist in such a country, while an acre of its land remains not fully cultivated, or a market unexplored for the vent of its commodities; "*totum dum viribus occupet orbem.*"

§ 42. Of course it is meant here to speak of a practicable increase of population, such as has been found by experience to exist in somewhat similar states of society; for as to arguments drawn from the arithmetical and geometrical ratio of increase in animals and food, however true they may be in theory, or supported by facts, drawn from the increase of goats in a desert island, or of men as ignorant as goats*; it would be a need-

* See Mr. Townshend on the Poor Laws.

less waste of time to shew, how little they apply to civilized and enlightened nations.

§ 43. Besides the operation of such an institution as the Poor Laws, and the population produced by it in the ordinary affairs of the society; there are some demands for men of an extraordinary nature, that tend still more to shew its political utility. Among others, the supply of people for purposes of war and colonization, is a very important consideration to a powerful country; and nothing can be clearer, than that they who can afford this supply with the least interruption to their ordinary occupations, and the probable increase of them, possess great advantages over those, who are under the necessity of taking every man they use for these purposes from the plough or the loom. It will easily be conceived what facilities, in this way, must arise from an institution, having a constant tendency to increase the number of people, beyond the actual demand for labour in civil occupations; even though the future demand from these last may increase likewise. To understand this, we must consider, that the number of heads of families will always be regulated by the ac-

tual demand for labour; because, wherever a man's hands are wanted, there a residence must be provided for him: but unless the demand should go to the extent of raising the wages of labour considerably, and thereby defeat itself, it will not encourage or enable these heads of families to rear many children; so that, without extraneous assistance for that purpose, should a further increase of demand occur, it must wait fifteen or sixteen years (while the children produced by it are born, and reared to a working age) before it can be satisfied: whereas an institution like the Poor Laws, by enabling and encouraging the heads of families to rear as many children as nature permits them to bear, keeps a stock of labour constantly on hand to answer such further demand. Any number, therefore, that may be wanted for war, or colonization, will not be taken from those actually employed in civil occupations, but from this extraordinary stock; and will not interfere with the present prosperity of the state, but only with a portion of its future expected increase, should the extra supply of people not be sufficient for both the extraordinary demands.

§ 44. Of the numerous absurdities into which men have been led, by too close an attention to theory, it is difficult to find one more palpable, than the idea that emigrations, or destruction of men in war, do not in fact diminish the population or power of a state; because, from the room and food left behind by the men killed, or emigrating, encouragement is given to the propagation of others by those remaining at home. The bare fact, as to numerical population, may approach to something near the truth; but as the animal lost by war, or emigration, is an active, perfect, proper man; and the thing got in return is not even an infant, but only the prospect (certain to be sure) that he will be replaced by one; the conclusion, as to numerical population, is certainly incorrect; and as to national power, altogether unfounded; unless indeed the philosophy be meant to apply exclusively to ancient Bœotia, where, one day, in a great dearth of men, occasioned by waste in war, the poet tells us,

——" Glebæ cœpere moveri,
Primaque de sulcis acies apparuit hastæ;
Tegmina mox capitum picto nutantia cono,
Mox humeri, pectusque, oneratæque brachia telis
Existunt, *crescitque seges clypeatu virorum.*"

To be serious: the method of producing grown men being in modern times infinitely less compendious, it does not admit of a doubt, that fifteen or sixteen years at least will be necessary, to replace a man emigrating or lost in war; and that a country, where a redundant population does not exist, must be weakened and thrown back, exactly in proportion to its waste for these purposes; though, numerically, after the first year or two, its total amount of population may not be diminished.

§ 45. This is now the actual state of France, where the number of living human beings, is to the full as large as before the revolution, probably larger; but consisting in a greater proportion than usual, of women, and of children, born in the room of men consumed in war, and tumults; let this fact, by the way, induce those, who wish, either absolutely, or conditionally, to diminish the population of England, or even to prevent its utmost possible increase, to reflect on the present power of France, even under this disadvantage; and what it may arrive at, when in a few years, these children may be grown into men.

§ 46. A redundant population, on the other hand, will render every loss of men in war and emigration harmless, in exact proportion to its redundancy: if more of the children, breeding up under the operation of the Poor Laws, should in any given year arrive at manhood, than the country has an actual demand for in domestic employment; the premature loss of any number by war, or emigration, will in that proportion not operate detrimentally on the general supply of labour.

§ 47. Suppose a country to employ 750,000 men in its army, navy, and foreign settlements; and that the annual average of deaths from accidents of war, climate, or natural causes, is one in fifteen: this would create an annual drain of 50,000 men, from the general mass of the population: again; suppose the Poor Laws of the same country should, on an average, be constantly operating in rearing a number of children under fourteen, the proportion of whom, that arrive at manhood, is 700,000; the average number of men, supplied annually to the country from this source, would be 50,000; a sum precisely sufficient to replace the an-

nual drain above stated. Now did this resource not exist, whence must these 50,000 men be drawn? clearly from the agriculture, and manufactures; which would raise the price of labour, and its produce; enhance the premium of enlistment; and introduce innumerable difficulties into all the operations of the society.

§ 48. This would be the case, supposing the demand for the produce of land, and labour, and consequently for hands to be employed in civil purposes, remains *stationary*; but, if, from particular circumstances, it should happen, that new resources continually opening should increase that demand, in a greater degree in war than in peace, the case would become infinitely stronger; the difficulties of procuring men for external operations, would be much greater, from the increased competition; the wages of labour, the premiums of enlistment, would rise to an enormous height; the 50,000 men produced by the Poor Laws, would not then give a sufficient supply of hands, for the whole of the increased wants of the community: could additional thousands be had from the same source, he who says it would be no

advantage, must be prepared to deny, that it is good for a nation, to be able to exercise its full energy in war, and at the same time prosecute all the arts of peace; to be able to defend itself against the attacks of an ambitious, or overbearing neighbour, and at the same time retain those enjoyments, and that proportion of happiness, and prosperity, which would equally have been its lot, had envy and jealousy repressed their shafts; and left it at peace, in the quiet pursuit of its usual occupations.

§ 49. Another beneficial effect, arising from an institution such as the Poor Laws, and the population it creates, is the facility given to all operations, tending to take advantage of any new channels of intercourse, that may present themselves, with a promising aspect to the public; but as the manner in which it produces this effect, and the arguments which might be adduced to prove it, are, with very little alteration, the same with those used in the last sections, on the subject of the extraordinary demands in war; it is thought less tedious, to leave them to the reader's recollection, than to fatigue him with a repetition in this place.

They may be briefly summed up in the following proposition: that, whereas the demand for labour only regulates the number of grown men in employment, but cannot encourage or sustain the rearing of large families; (or in other words the providing a supply of men for extraordinary demands,) without raising wages, and thereby annihilating itself; the Poor Laws, without producing this mischievous effect, are continually supplying a large extra-population, to answer any sudden or extraordinary occasion, that may present itself.

§ 50. The subject of machinery, for shortening labour, is so closely interwoven with all discussions relative to commercial population, that they must evidently be very imperfect, unless they include a consideration of its effects upon the state of society. It has been asserted by some, that the introduction of machinery does away the necessity of a redundant population, and low wages, in the prosecution of commercial prosperity; because, the machine, supplying the place of men, they are of course unnecessary; and, making up an immense quantity of materials, they can of course be af-

forded as cheap, or cheaper, than if made by labourers at low wages. This reasoning certainly appears plausible; yet it may be found perhaps, on further consideration, scarcely to bear out the conclusion built upon it.

§ 51. And first as to population: One of the causes of the introduction of machinery, in aid of labour, seems to be, the high rate of wages, caused by an increase in the general demand for labour; or of men for naval and military purposes. The introduction of machinery enables a smaller number to supply the existing demand, as cheaply and effectually as the larger number, who were employed before the wages were raised, or machinery used; and the surplus remains applicable to the supply of the increased general demand. This cause, however, can only apply to the introduction of the more simple machines; and is quite inadequate to account for the erection of complex and expensive ones. Sir Richard Arkwright, and those who followed his example, could never have reaped a profit from their cotton-mills, unless more yarn had been wanted, than could possibly have been spun by hand at any rate of wages.

§ 52. It seems probable, therefore, that machinery can never be erected to a great extent in any country, which has not a very increasing demand for its manufactures; because the expence of erecting, and working it, can only be repaid, and a profit gained upon the capital, by the very great increase of the article fabricated; which of course requires a proportionate increase of people, to be employed in transporting, retailing, or exporting it: the operation of the machinery is, not to lessen the number of the employed, but only to change the nature of their employment; a cotton-mill, though its mules and jennies may act as substitutes for hands, in spinning warp and woof; and may therefore lessen the number of persons employed in those actions; will, by the increased quantity of its produce, create a demand for additional hands, to be employed in other purposes relative to the manufacture, and may therefore increase the whole number of persons engaged. The improvement resembles, in some measure, that of the stereotype method of printing; the prime cost of which is larger than setting the press in the usual way; but the block once made, is capable of being used for a much larger

number of copies, by saving the labour of resetting the press for every edition of a book: it is therefore, though ultimately more profitable, calculated only for such works as are continually increasing in demand: and though it may diminish the number of printer's compositors, may increase that of paper-makers, bookbinders, &c. &c.

§ 53. With an increasing demand in the market then, for any article of commerce, the introduction of machinery into its manufacture will, in most instances, not diminish the number of hands employed about it; but only enable them to make, and sell a much larger quantity; and if the population employed should be reduced, in proportion to the introduction of machinery, the profit to be gained upon the article, after it comes out of the maker's hands, must be given up to foreigners.

§ 54. It will, however, add another set of manufacturers, viz. the machine-makers; and an additional number to the preparers, and venders, of all the materials employed in constructing, repairing, and working machinery: the more one reflects on the great complication of some, and the high

prime cost (in a great measure the remuneration of labour only) of other machines; the more perhaps may we be inclined to think, that (even supposing the demand for the article manufactured remains stationary) the additional labour created, forms no small drawback upon that thrown out of employ *.

§ 55. But however this may be, it is perfectly clear, that in a country, upon which the demand for manufactured produce is continually increasing, taking into consideration the new labour put in motion, both to answer that demand in detail, to construct new machinery, and to work and repair the old; a redundant population will be necessary, to enable the country to reap the full advantage of its introduction; and precisely in that proportion, in which the invention may be found to answer, by enlarging the quantity of goods manufactured.

* This labour is certainly of a more temporary and occasional nature, than that employed in the regular production of other articles. Machine-making is, however, a trade which *regularly* employs a few masters, and some workmen.

§ 56. The excellent and philanthropic Mr. Dale's cotton-mills at New Lanark, may be cited as a signal instance of the justness of this reasoning: he erected an expensive machine in the neighbourhood of a considerable country town (Old Lanark); but soon found the supply of people so totally inadequate to the demand for labour, in the various operations, produced by his thriving manufacture; that before he could carry it to any great extent, he was absolutely obliged to build a town of his own (New Lanark) at the foot of his machinery; and they have been gradually thriving and enlarging together. Here indeed the manufacture introduced was an entirely new one in the country, as well as in many other cases, where machinery has been employed; but this circumstance only makes the argument still stronger for a redundant population, to make the most of the various ramifications of profit, into which these new articles are ultimately found to branch out.

§ 57. With respect to the question, how far machinery counteracts the necessity of low wages? let us reflect, that when these

are high, and population low, the expence of constructing machines, and circulating commodities, will be so comparatively large; that, in order to gain a profit on the capital laid out, and the regular expence entailed in working them, and in the various stages the article passes through, between the manufacturer and the consumer; it must possibly be sold as high, as with a redundant population, and consequent low wages, it could be sold without any machine at all, but made by men's hands *: in which case the state would be only exchanging men, who can be converted occasionally to other useful purposes, for mere machines, calculated for one purpose only, and absolute lumber in every other respect: to explain this; suppose a manufacturer to lay out a thousand pounds a year, in wages, to forty labourers, in a country where people are numerous, and the average wages of labour ten shillings a week; that these labourers manufacture a given quantity of goods, which

* It is acknowledged that the machinery in this country is, *in some particular cases*, employed in operations, that could hardly be performed by the hands of any number of men; but this circumstance will only be found to strengthen the conclusion, with respect to the *general* expediency of low wages of labour, notwithstanding the existence of machinery.

may be made by a manufacturer, in another country, where people are few, and the wages of labour high, by five labourers at twenty shillings a week each, and a machine; which, from the high price of labour and materials, would cost a sum in erecting, the interest of which, together with the necessary repairs, and expence of working, would amount to £750 a year *. Now it appears, that the introduction of this machine, or any number of them, would give no advantage to the country possessing it, in point of cheapness of its goods; but that it would considerably diminish its effective

* A common-sized steam-engine will cost £4000 in this country; in one, where the average rate of wages is 20s. a week, it could not cost less than £7000; the interest of which at 12 per cent. would be £840, besides the coals for working, (the attendance of men is already taken into the account,) and the necessary repairs. But a steam-engine will do more work than thirty-five or forty men; what is said therefore in the text, is not meant *to apply exactly to all the machinery* of this country, but merely to illustrate strongly the truth, that in proportion to the cheapness of labour, will be the advantage of all machinery. The author cannot close this note, without suggesting to those, whose information on the subject would warrant such an undertaking, that an essay on the various machinery of this country, shewing the effects of each in economy, on population, &c. &c. would be a most useful, and entertaining performance,

strength in point of population; and in case of an increased demand for the manufacture in question, the country, which worked by men at low wages, would have many advantages over that, working by machinery, and men at high wages. First it might set up, and work a machine of its own, at half the price of the former; and would besides have hands enough remaining, to raise the increased quantity of raw materials requisite, and to export the article in its own ships, if the demand be from abroad: these operations too would be performed at half the price; so that it must soon drive the latter out of the market, by the superior cheapness of its articles, and facility of its commerce.

§ 58. It is not meant to deny, that a set of manufacturers, possessing superior skill and ingenuity, may not hold possession of the market for some time, against others, who possess the advantages of an inferior price of labour, and greater population, in a small degree only: but that in proportion to the difference between them in these two last advantages, will be the security, or instability of their commerce and manufac-

tures. Let it be remembered, that the more populous nation may acquire skill and ingenuity in a few years, by the acuteness and experience of individuals, or the protection and attention of their government: but a redundant population, and the advantages resulting from it, can only accrue to a country, from the long and customary operation of laws, founded in deep reflection on the national resources; and persevered in by the vigour and wisdom of those, to whom their execution is entrusted.

§ 59. Before the close of this chapter, it is necessary to make a few observations, upon one argument of a very singular nature, used by those, who seem determined at all hazards, to condemn the system of the Poor Laws. The refutation of this argument may perhaps lead us a little more into particular facts, arising out of the operation of the Poor Laws of England, than the general nature of the arguments used in this chapter may seem to warrant: yet as the objection certainly goes to affect the principle, upon which the policy of such a system, as those laws exhibit, chiefly rests; a due consideration of it seems absolutely

essential to the forming of any general opinion, as to the expediency of admitting that principle as the ground of practice.

§ 60. A doubt has now been started by those very persons who inveighed against the Poor Laws, chiefly from their effects in encouraging marriage, increasing population, and lowering the price of labour; whether, after all, they do in real fact increase population or no! It is said, that "the *obvious* tendency of the Poor Laws certainly is, to encourage marriage; but a closer attention to all their *indirect*, as well as direct effects, may make it a matter of doubt, how far they really do this; that they clearly tend, in their general operation, to discourage sobriety and economy, to encourage idleness, and the desertion of children, and to put virtue and vice more on a level than they otherwise would be; but one cannot presume to say positively, that they tend to encourage population *." Without noticing the incongruity of this reasoning, with the objection formerly made against the Poor Laws,

* See Mr. Malthus's Reply to the chief Objections against the Essay on Population, 4to.

that they encourage population, without encouraging the growth of food for its support; which has been the chief foundation of the arguments used against their political tendency; we will proceed to the investigation of the correctness of the reasoning itself. With respect to the accusations of discouraging sobriety and economy, encouraging idleness and the desertion of children, putting virtue and vice upon a level; they will more properly become subjects of discussion in the future stages of this work, where the improvements of which the Poor Laws are capable will be treated of. Suffice it to say here, that, as far as they are founded in reason, they do not arise from the general principles of policy, upon which those laws rest; but are entirely irregularities introduced by the ill execution of their provisions; and the neglect that has constantly pervaded the Legislature, in altering and adapting the laws to the changes continually taking place in the state of society; particularly to the increasing liberty introduced among the lower orders (by commerce and an increasing demand for labour), of passing their time, and spending their earnings, free from all control. When those

provisions, which are accused of producing the above evils, were enacted, and for some time afterwards, both absolute law, and the habits of subordination prevalent among the poor, gave their superiors, and magistrates in particular, a considerable degree of control over all their actions; and abridged much of that perfect liberty which every Englishman now claims, to do what he will with his own, and with himself in particular. It is not meant to contend, that this liberty should now be abridged; but that the Poor Laws should be adapted to the alteration of circumstances; in order to guard the public from becoming the dupes of practices, which could not have been foreseen, and therefore not prevented at their first institution. Should the Legislature (instead of taking this trouble) proceed to abolish the laws altogether, it would deservedly incur the same reproach with him, who should suffer the lock of his strong box to rust and decay through neglect, and then throw it aside, and expose his treasures to the mercy of robbers, to save himself the trouble of cleaning and repairing it.

§ 61. The reason given for doubting whether the Poor Laws do in fact encourage population, is drawn from an observation of Mr. Young's; that every man who wishes to marry cannot always find a cottage to live in. This effect is pretended to be accounted for, by the disposition of landlords *to pull down* their cottages, in order to avoid the charge of the poor; which drives more people to towns than would otherwise have gone, and thus gives a relative discouragement to agriculture, and encouragement to manufactures. This is called the *indirect* operation of the Poor Laws, which by diminishing the number of cottages in the country, prevents the formation of families, by the want of habitations.

§ 62. Supposing it to be true, that the number of cottages in the country is sensibly diminished; (which, however, is directly contradicted, or rather the reverse proved, by attentive observation, both of numbers added in the old villages, and of the hamlets actually created by extensive enclosures;) what does this prove, but that, from superior skill in agriculture, and perhaps from the enlargement of farms, the same produce can be

raised by fewer hands? But if, as it is acknowledged, those thrown out of employment have migrated to the neighbourhood of the manufactures, where houses have been erected for their reception; where is the proof that the indirect operation of the Poor Laws upon the number of cottages, supposing it to exist, has diminished the whole number of tenements? Nothing can be more certain than that wherever the demand for a man's labour exists, there a house will be provided for his reception. It is for the public interest, that the population should be so distributed; and with great submission to the authority, on which the opinion is advanced, there seems good reason to doubt, whether the mere residence of unemployed persons, either in towns, or in the country, will have any relative effect on the prosperity of agriculture, or manufactures: for it is not to be supposed, that landlords will be so blind to their own interests, as to pull down cottages, to an extent, that would reduce the supply of labour below the demand, and thereby raise the price of it. The truth seems to be, that from the increasing demand in agriculture, and manufactures, the number of tenements has considerably increased, both in towns,

and in the country. The potteries of Staffordshire; the collieries, and iron-works of that county, and Shropshire; the machinery of Derbyshire, Lancashire, and other manufacturing counties; and the extensive enclosures of Hampshire, Lincolnshire, and other great agricultural counties; are proofs of the accuracy of this assertion *. We need only open our eyes to be convinced of it. So that unless it can be shewn, that more men exist than the demand for labour can employ, we may perhaps be inclined to doubt the fact, that there exists a general want of habitations; and should any young man, capable of labour, appear to us to be prevented from marrying by that cause; it may perhaps be found in fact, that it was not because a habitation

* In this enumeration have not been included many small habitations, erected on forests, and extensive commons. When a man has once taken possession of such a dwelling, it requires a legal process, and therefore some trouble to eject him. A labourer has been known to get together a few materials, unobserved; and in a long autumn night, with the assistance of friends, to erect and be the tenant of the cottage before morning. It is then his CASTLE; and as the interests of extensive manors and forests are seldom well looked after, it is often permitted to remain, through neglect, unwillingness to take the trouble of a law-suit, from supposed humanity, and various other causes.

could not be found in England; but because he did not take his labour to that market, where one was to be found, that the effect arose.

§ 63. There is a further inaccuracy in the argument above alluded to, as far as it goes to deny the effect of the Poor Laws in encouraging population: for however true it may be, that some men are prevented from marrying, because they cannot find a house, it is certainly no proof that those who can, may not be encouraged by the prospect of support held out by the Poor Laws, to marry, and rear large families. The number of habitations existing in the kingdom, may regulate the number of heads of families; but will in no way prevent the operation of the Poor Laws, in encouraging the production of children, and in rearing large families to manhood; who are ready to settle again, wherever the demand for their labour shall cause habitations to be erected for their reception.

§ 64. In fact, direct proof may be had of the very extensive operation of the Poor Laws in promoting population. It appears from the returns relative to the poor laid

before Parliament in 1804, that 300,000 children, under fourteen years of age, were entirely, and permanently supported out of the rates. A great proportion of these were orphans, or the children of persons in the service of their country; and some, it is to be feared, the unfortunate offspring of illicit connexion, or deserted by inhuman parents: vices, the increase of which may fairly be laid to the account of the barbarous state of ignorance, in which the poor have been permitted to remain; and the neglect of the obvious policy, of substituting, for that control over their persons, which the increasing liberty of later years has destroyed, the control of education over their minds; by instilling early principles of virtue, and convincing them, at a time when impressions once made are indelible, that their true interests, even in this world, are best consulted in a moral and regular conduct.

§ 65. To ascertain however, how much must be subtracted from the beneficial operation of the Poor Laws, on population, we must consider, how many of these deserted children could really have been supported by their parents, had they continued with them.

It is not to be denied, that some few, from mere idleness, and the knowledge that their families will not starve, but be supported by the public, may have disencumbered themselves by flight of a charge they could have borne. But when it is recollected, that a man, so conducting himself, is liable to a very severe punishment, the dread of which will be continually hanging over him, preventing the enjoyment of that ease, which could be his only motive for the desertion: that he must at the same time divest himself of the strongest natural feeling, implanted by Providence in the breast of man, made still stronger by habit, and further fortified by a degree of pride, not peculiar to that rank of life, though strongly pervading it, with respect to the comparative condition of their own children, and their neighbour's: it may be fairly concluded, that none but the most profligate, and abandoned, will persevere in such a course; notwithstanding the little pains that may have been taken to assist by education the kind influence of nature in their breasts. Experience indeed seems to justify this observation, and to give reason to think the total amount is but small.

§ 66. If we estimate the number of children, thus obtruded upon the public, who would have been supported by their parents, (had no such provision as the Poor Laws existed,) at twenty thousand, we shall probably be above the truth; for it must not be forgotten, that many of the most profligate, and abandoned of those, who now desert their families, would equally do so, did the dereliction abandon them to the operation of casual succour only. This will leave a remainder of 280,000 children, entirely supported from the rates, who, whatever share the Poor Laws may have had in their production, must inevitably perish without assistance; and may therefore be stated as one clear addition to the population, on account of the Poor Laws.

§ 67. There is a still greater number of children, belonging to those, occasionally relieved from the rates, who are partly reared into manhood by their assistance. Every overseer, or magistrate, who has acted half a year in the country, knows, that a considerable proportion of the money raised goes to assist those, whose families are too numerous to be supported by the average rate of a

labourer's wages; or who are prevented by casual sickness, from labouring for their support. Let it be remembered too, that the benefit does not only extend to the period of time, in which, or the number of children to whom, actual support is afforded; but communicates itself to the rest of the family, thereby preserved to more fortunate circumstances; but who would be miserably pinched, would in part die, and the rest become weak, and decrepit animals, were the amount of the wages earned the absolute limit, in all cases, to the support of the family.

§ 68. It has been asserted, that the impulse of private benevolence is sufficiently strong, to counteract these misfortunes. If it be meant to affirm, that an equal number of persons would be supported by private charity; the consequence would evidently be, the intolerable burthening of the humane and benevolent, with the whole sum, which ought to be paid, in equal proportions, by all persons of property; and which, to have a permanently beneficial effect, must be so paid. If it be meant to insinuate, that the precariousness of the supply would tend to

discourage marriage, and the birth of children, and thus, by lessening the number of people, lessen that of poor also; what is this, but a direct admission of the efficacy of the Poor Laws in promoting population? since all, who are born, have a right under those laws to such sustenance, as will rear them into manhood; and hitherto it has been found feasible to put them in possession of that right. This will clearly appear, when the very small proportion of deaths, which take place in this country, compared with others, and considering the employments of the people, comes under consideration.

§ 69. Finally, it may be useful to point out, by a reference to foreign countries, the effects of more casual charity, or the wages of labour only, on the condition of the poor. Let any man, who has travelled over the continent, compare the horrible and disgusting objects generally spread along the roads and villages there, with the "bold peasantry" of England. Let him reflect upon the different efficiency of the two animals in war, in navigation, or in any of the active occupations; and he will not be long in determining, whether voluntary charity, or provision by

law, is best calculated to produce an useful, and thriving population: he will easily likewise be led by induction, to ascertain their relative effects upon the quantity, as well as quality of the people.

§ 70. Upon a review of the various arguments, offered to the reader's consideration in this chapter, he may be inclined to attribute less importance to some, than to others. They all appeared to the author of sufficient weight, to be absolutely necessary to the fair discussion of the question: and if he has been fortunate enough to state them in such a manner, as to produce the same conviction in the reader's mind, that the consideration of them pressed upon his own; these points may be considered as established between them:

1st, That a redundant, and healthy population is one of the most powerful, and necessary instruments in securing the prosperity of a nation, advancing in the pursuit of riches; and surrounded by others, employing equal natural resources, in the same career.

2dly, That the nation, which possesses the most of it, must *(cæteris paribus)* rise the fastest in the scale of society.

3dly, That such a system as the Poor Laws, is eminently calculated to produce such a population.

4thly, That therefore, a nation, possessing those laws, would not act very wisely in abrogating them, supposing it to have no other lights upon the subject, but those derived from reason and argument; because,

5thly, Greater dangers than any which can be stated as the probable ultimate consequences of such laws, would immediately follow their abrogation; as far as can be ascertained, by the inferences which have been drawn from the preceding arguments.

We may, therefore, *à fortiori*, conclude 6thly, That if a country should be prevailed upon to do so, by any means, after having had a long experience of the benefits arising from them; its conduct could only be characterized in the words of the poet;

What line of conduct, the experience of England should induce it to adopt on this subject, will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

AN HISTORICAL DEDUCTION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE POOR LAWS IN ENGLAND.

§ 1. PREVIOUS to taking a retrospective view of the actual means, by which a country of extensive territory has advanced to a high state of prosperity; it may tend much to elucidate the discussion, if we inquire into the natural means, by which (though not interfered with) it might possibly have risen to the same point. For, since the providence of the wisest of mankind is insufficient to foresee the consequences of laws, or political measures, however maturely they may have been weighed beforehand: it follows, that he cannot devise such, as will counteract the evil tendency of events, and keep the state always in the high road to prosperity, how clearly soever he may perceive that road. It must therefore be very important to us, to know how far any accidental deviation from it may have retarded or accelerated our progress; how far any existing deviation may be carried with safety; and the best means of regaining the beaten track, should the de-

viation be found detrimental to the public welfare.

§ 2. It is consistent with reason and experience to assert, that in a country of extensive territory, agriculture will naturally be the chief pursuit of the people, till most of the best lands are cultivated; and the remainder would require a considerable capital to be laid out upon them, on a remote prospect of return, in enclosing, draining, embanking, or other expensive modes of improvement.

§ 3. They will then of course turn their views to commerce and manufactures, for this plain reason; that the profits arising from them will be much larger, and the returns quicker, than from the land; and it is clear, that by following this plan, (so long as those effects result from it,) the state itself would be enriched; that is, the whole amount of the products of its land, and labour, would increase the faster. But as the increase of capital arising from manufactures, and trade, will always raise the price of the produce of land; it is just as clear, that it would in turn become the in-

terest of the capitalist, to lay out his money in some of the operations necessary to bring inferior or waste lands into cultivation; which, by carrying the superiority of commercial skill, and enterprise, into the application of his capital to the soil, would increase its productions, and quicken its returns. When this again had lowered the price, by increasing the quantity of the produce of land, and thereby reducing its profits, the same rotation would again take place; the regularity of which would never be disturbed, unless some extraordinary demand, either for manufactures, or the produce of land, should occur: in which circumstances, as the profits arising from the article in demand would be enhanced, the interest of the country would dictate its supply, so long as the superior profits overpaid the inconveniences arising from the irregularity. But as that could never be the case, to the extent of permitting one source of profit, to establish itself upon the ruin of the other; no fear need be entertained that (with proper precautions) the irregularity would ever proceed too far: it may therefore be permitted; and, if the state would otherwise sink in the scale of nations, should be recommended. For it is incumbent

on a statesman, undertaking to legislate for a country, surrounded by others, as powerful in natural resources as itself, and equally in pursuit of riches; to cast about for those means, which will carry it quickest to the wished-for goal; consistently with its retaining such comparative superiority of happiness, and morality, as it may at any time have possessed, or be capable of enjoying. It is not enough to say, My system will certainly lead you by slow degrees to a high state of happiness, provided you are not interfered with; or provided all your neighbours will adopt it likewise: but to seek for that which, taking the known jealousy of rival states into the account, will be strong enough to protect you from its effects; and keep you at least equal, if possible superior, to any advancement they may make. You must otherwise decidedly sink in the scale, and in the end be swallowed up by those, who have learned enterprise, from observing the consequences of your timidity.

§ 4. If the extraordinary demand, above alluded to, should be for manufactures, and should augment their production beyond their usual proportion to the produce of the

soil, an outcry is immediately raised on the ground of insecurity: the example of the great commercial nations of Europe, the Dutch, Venetians, and Genoese, is cited; whose prosperity has passed away, and, "like the baseless fabric of a vision, left not a wreck behind." But let it be recollected, these have invariably been countries possessed of a limited territory; who (their commerce once impaired) had no other resources to apply to. Whereas, in a country of extensive surface, a blow given to commerce, though it may throw capital out of its most profitable employment, and thereby check the national prosperity; may still not endanger its existence, unless it be hard pressed by more powerful rivals: because the capital may yet be invested in the cultivation and improvement of land, and the physical force of the country, though diminished, may still remain respectable.

§ 5. These observations being premised, let us now take an historical review of the effects, the Poor Laws are conceived to have had on the condition of England.

§ 5*. The usual account given of their establishment is, that, after the dissolution of the monasteries at the Reformation, numbers of people, maintained in idleness at the abbey gate, became so troublesome, by their distress, and the crimes to which it prompted them, that a legal provision became necessary for their relief; as well as for reclaiming them from vice and idleness, by providing employment, and obliging them to labour at it.

§ 6. To such as have inquired into what remains of the history of those times, with a view of getting information on the subject, there may appear to be some objections to this account of the affair; arising as well from a consideration of the circumstances attending the hospitality of the monasteries, as from the dates of the several transactions. In the first place, it appears very uncertain, if the monasteries gave any kind of permanent relief to the lower orders of the people, excepting those who resided on their own demesnes; and, according to the custom of the times, received great part of their wages in provisions. This might very possibly have been distributed at the abbey gate; an

arrangement equally agreeable to the inclinations of both parties: the monks thereby obtained the reputation of extensive charity; and the peasants (who, under such masters, were but lazy cultivators, and had much time upon their hands) acquired, what men in that rank of life have always been peculiarly fond of, an opportunity of congregating together, and talking over the affairs of the parish: the discussion of those of the state had not yet descended so low in the scale of society. These peasants, however, (when the lands passed into the hands of laymen, and being set at higher rents, were consequently better cultivated,) still continued on the farms, and were more actively employed in their tillage.

§ 7. The real hospitality of the religious houses was chiefly confined to the entertainment of travellers of distinction, public officers, and others in the superior walks of life: it is well known, that the richer abbies were the customary halting-places even of our kings; such accommodation was peculiarly necessary from the extreme badness of the inns of those days;

—Ubi mures
Intus reptant, extus fures;
Sunt camini, sine foco,
Et culinæ, sine coquo *.

§ 8. Moreover, supposing it a fact, that any number of persons were deprived of their usual means of livelihood, on the dissolution of the monasteries, in 1539, they must long have passed away to "that bourne, whence no traveller returns," before the enactment of the Poor Laws † in the 43d of Elizabeth, or the year 1601; a distance of time exceeding sixty years; nor could their progeny, remaining so long afterwards, have been very numerous, if they had been struggling during the whole period against want and wretchedness. It is true, that in the earlier parts of that queen's reign, as well as for two centuries before, many laws were enacted, enforcing the necessity, and recommending the propriety, of making collections for the poor: but the numerous repetitions of these injunctions are a proof of

* Barnabæ Itinerarium, written probably since the Reformation; but it will scarcely be contended, that the inns were better before that event.

† All those monks, who were converted into beggars at the dissolution of the monasteries, must certainly have been long dead, and forgotten.

their inefficacy; and give reason to believe, what indeed every law that was enacted on the subject expressly states, that the number of people wanting relief increased daily, and was beyond the reach of voluntary charity: at length, therefore, the system was made effectual, by appointing officers authorized to enforce the collection of a rate, and to lay it out for the benefit of the poor, under the provisions of the law.

§ 9. Now we have seen, that this increased number of paupers, could not have descended through a struggle of sixty years against adversity, from any persons deprived of subsistence, at the dissolution of the monasteries. We know too, that there was more employment for people in Queen Elizabeth's reign, than in any that had preceded it; they were not therefore persons thrown out of employ by the failure of any pre-existing demand for their particular labour. They could only then have been a part of a generally augmented population: and a little reflection will soon not only convince us, that this was really the case, but will also enable us to discover the cause which produced it.

§ 10. The transfer of the lands of the monasteries into the hands of laymen, and their consequent improved cultivation *, in-

* In the earlier ages, when military power, and a large retinue of dependents, was the favourite magnificence of the nobles; and the feodal system existed in all its rigour, on the lands of the laity; those of the monks were certainly the best cultivated, and most productive. Many great improvements on land were made by them: witness the recovery of soil in Athelney by the monks, placed by Alfred in the midst of a bog; which they soon converted into smiling pastures: and above all, the mighty and magnificent works, raised by the abbots of Glastonbury, entirely for the purpose of improving the lands in their neighbourhood. Though some few of the barons, even in those days, rose superior to the barbarism of the times: among whom was Richard de Rulos; who built the town of Deeping in Lincolnshire, and changed the banks of the Welland, from quagmires, to fields, and orchards. But in later times, particularly about the Reformation, too many proofs exist of the degeneracy, and laziness of the monks, to doubt that all their concerns partook of the general apathy of the proprietors. While, by the policy of Henry the Seventh, who created in his barons a taste for a milder species of magnificence; and still more perhaps from the alteration in the state of society, which produced in them a desire to exchange their crowd of retainers, for the luxuries to be procured by an increase of rent from their estates; a proportionate increase of industry, and enterprise, was exerted on the estates of the laity. The demand for labour therefore on any land, passing from the hands of an abbey, to a layman, could not but be much augmented. We find

troduced for a short time, so great an increase in the demand for labour, that population must, with the first impulse, have increased exceedingly. This will appear the more probable, when we consider, that the value of those lands amounted to £160,000 *per annum*; a sum, which, as land was then in general let for one shilling an acre, and may now be said to be rated low at fifteen shillings, is equal to near two millions and a half of our present rental; about a fourteenth part of the whole rental of England.

§ 11. But, as the surplus population had not yet settled themselves steadily to the pursuits of commerce, in consequence of the impolitic privileges and burthens which operated against it, and of the wars of those times, it is not surprising, that, when the extraordinary demand ceased, in consequence of the cultivation of the abbey-

from Bishop Fleetwood's Chronicon Preciosum, that the price of wheat, and other produce of land, became much more regular, and low, upon an average, from the improved cultivation of these lands; and so continued, till late in the sixteenth century; when it may be supposed they were brought up to the average cultivation of the rest of the country. This cheapness of corn, being temporary and partial, must have operated, as a rise in wages, on the production of people.

lands up to the average level of improvement, the country should be covered with wanderers out of employ, and beggars. This account of the affair is strongly corroborated, if not fully proved, by the prices of corn at that period; which continued low, till the seventeenth year of Queen Elizabeth, on account of the additional produce raised, and brought to market from the abbey-lands: but as this is about the period, when one may suppose the second generation, produced by the effects of the dissolution, were rising into manhood; the increasing demand for food, not being answered by an augmented supply from those lands, for the reasons already stated, corn rose so suddenly, and considerably, that its average price increased more than threefold. Though the importation of corn was practised during the whole period, yet, as well as all other commercial speculations, it was so little understood, that the supply from that quarter was altogether precarious; and very little affected the state of the market.

§ 12. The statesmen of those times, who had studied, and were acquainted with their country's interests, to a degree, at least equal

to any, that have existed since; and who steadily followed that interest, where the power, and prerogatives of the crown did not interfere; after trying in vain various gentle means, to convert this surplus population to useful purposes, at length resolved to introduce the famous statute of the forty-third Elizabeth: upon which the Poor Laws still rest; and from which, (it has been well observed) the further they have departed, the less useful have they become. This was the first Poor Law, which directed the training up of children in habits of industry; and indeed the only one yet enacted, which, by ordering employment to be provided for them, had regard as much to their improvement in morals, and utility, as to the relief of their necessities.

§ 12*. The population of England at this time amounted to about four millions and a half.

§ 13. It would be curious to know, how far Elizabeth's ministers, who were perfectly acquainted with the capabilities of the country, to pursue the true line of policy, calculated to lead it to greatness, foresaw the effects, which the Poor Laws might have, in

securing a healthy, and redundant population for its future operations. Certain it is, that, being immediately put into execution, they must have reared into useful subjects many, who would otherwise have perished miserably. As a proof of the sense of this benefit, in the minds of enlightened men afterwards; Lord Bacon, in the succeeding reign, when commerce began to flourish, enumerates among the advantages, the nation was then reaping from the laws, and policy of the late reign, the effect which they had produced upon population.

§ 14. Great reason had he to think so; for "tillage was now in a low condition;" the abbey-lands had been (as before observed) for some time brought into an average state of cultivation, with the rest of the island: and from the abuses of purveyance, and impolitic laws, no further improvement in agriculture was then to be expected; particularly as the attention of the government was turned to other pursuits. But from the redundancy of population, (ascribed to the policy of the late reign,) operating under favourable external circumstances, the attention, and protection of government, and a

long peace; "trade flourished; navigation extended itself in a high degree; the navy was augmented; Virginia, New England, and Barbadoes were settled; and the nation became more and more populous." And let it be repeated, all this happened, while the state of tillage was unfavourable to the increase of population; the price of wheat, which had been gradually rising since the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign, when the supply from the abbey-lands ceased, had increased by the end of James's reign, to eight or nine times its amount in the former period; yet the impolitic burthens on the land were so great, that even this increase did not materially encourage its cultivation. But commerce flourished, and colonial emigrations took place; (which were greatly facilitated by the redundant population created by the Poor Laws;) and in their turn created a demand for labour.

§ 15. This demand, by providing those already in existence with employment, and habitations, enabled them, (by the assistance of the Poor Laws,) to rear to manhood that surplus population, who, from the unfortunate disputes occurring in the subsequent

reign, instead of being employed in the further prosecution of national prosperity, were persuaded by designing leaders, to turn their arms against each other, and perished miserably in civil war.

§ 16. The proof, that the great comparative population existing at this time, was in part created by the Poor Laws, and not solely by high wages, consequent upon the demand for labour, is; that, from what can be ascertained of the relative amount of a labourer's wages, with the price of provisions, they would not produce him so great a quantity of the necessaries of life, as at present; and therefore could not enable him to rear a large family, without assistance. The price of corn, compared with that of labour, was out of all comparison higher than at present: but as grain did not then form the chief part of the sustenance of the poor, to the same degree as in later times, we may set down, against this excess, the price of meat, and other necessaries of life; which, though they certainly bore a higher proportion to wages than at present, did not do so in the same degree with corn.

§ 17. From the death of James I. to the Restoration, we find, that (with exception of the rebellion) commerce, manufactures, and population increased, in defiance of the price of corn, which continued high during the whole period: the legal interest of money was reduced, in 1651, to six per cent.; and the reduction of interest, as Mr. Chalmers well observes, is at once a proof of previous acquisition, and the means of future prosperity. The augmentation of commerce had, in 1660, raised the price of land, which in 1621 was at twelve years purchase, in some places to sixteen, in others (as it is asserted, but perhaps not quite correctly) to twenty-eight years purchase; but purveyance, and other abuses, still prevented any great increase of skill, and enterprise, in cultivation. As no material alteration took place in the relative prosperity of the two great sources of wealth during this period; or in the operation of the Poor Laws; any investigation of the causes, which produced the general prosperity of the country, would only be a repetition of the foregoing sections.

§ 18. In the reign of Charles II. new regulations were introduced into the Poor

Laws, with the laudable intention of facilitating their execution; and improving the moral and political situation of the poor. How far the introduction of the laws of settlements, as they now stand, really answered these intentions, will be discussed in a future chapter: but it seems certain, that, by pointing out more particularly the parties bound to afford relief, and thereby preventing all evasion on the ground of uncertainty in that respect, they must rather have enlarged, than diminished the operation of the laws upon population; which accordingly, we find, increased greatly between the Restoration and Revolution. With respect to commerce, and manufactures during the same period, Sir Josiah Child, Sir William Petty, and Dr. Davenant all agreed, that the commerce, and riches of England did never, in any former age, increase so fast, as in the busy period from the Restoration, to the Revolution: though agriculture yet languished, from the causes above stated, and the importation of corn from abroad occasionally rose to a great height: consequently many more people existed, and were usefully employed in England, than its produce would feed.

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§ 19. We have now seen the prosperity of England, gradually rising higher and higher for above a century, in defiance of a languishing agriculture; which was so far from affording sufficient nourishment to the increasing population, that the importation of grain gradually rose with it. The consideration of the next period may perhaps enable us to form a just estimate of the fancied dangers, likely to follow the pursuit of such a road to prosperity, in a country of extensive territory not fully cultivated.

§ 20. With respect to the fact, and actual amount, of the augmentation of people, during the century we have been treating of, Lord Chief Justice Hale asserted in 1670; "that mankind had very much increased within this kingdom since Queen Elizabeth's time, even to admiration." And we find, by a comparison of Gregory King with other writers, that the population at the Revolution, amounted to not less than six millions; an increase of a million and a half since the institution of the Poor Laws.

§ 21. The facts, and considerations contained in this section, are added for the in-

formation of those, who may be still inclined to doubt the share to be attributed to the Poor Laws, in producing this population, and prosperity. The extensive, and destructive wars, which took place during this period, as well as the emigrations to colonies, must have been a continual drain upon the population; and could hardly have been supplied without interfering with the increase of commerce and manufactures; unless some further means than the mere demand for labour, and the existing state of wages had operated in the production of people. As far as we can learn, the sum raised by the Poor's Rates increased, in proportion to the manufactures, and demand for labour: in 1677, the amount was calculated, with much supposed accuracy, at more than £600,000; and the exports, (the work of men's hands, and no bad criterion of the general state of the manufactures) were valued at two millions; in 1698, the rates had increased to £800,000; and the exports to more than three millions and a half. These facts, joined to the arguments in the last chapter, proving the tendency of the money expended under the Poor Laws, to promote population, will, it is hoped, be admitted to form reasonable

grounds for concluding; that they operated much, in giving that facility, which the nation then enjoyed, of extending its commerce, manufactures, and power; and of collecting that force, which enabled it to defend itself, immediately afterwards, from the most formidable attack but one it ever experienced.

§ 22. We come now to a very interesting period of our annals, which will tend to shew the justness of the remark, that in a country of extensive territory not fully cultivated, the disproportion between its population, and the food raised for its support, can never extend far, without grossly impolitic and oppressive burthens upon the land. We have seen, in the last period, a population fast increasing beyond the supply of food raised from the soil, and resting much for its support on that procured by manufactures and commerce; pursuits which, under all the circumstances of the times, paid better than agriculture: under this system, we have seen the nation growing daily in prosperity and power. At the beginning of the period following the Revolution, wholesome laws for the encouragement of agriculture were made: the abuses of purveyance, and licenses of monopoly abolished;

and a spirit of enterprise, arising from the altered maxims of state policy, was quickly created. Under such encouragement, the high price of corn, and the natural taste of man for real property, diverted so large a portion of capital, and labour to the cultivation of the soil, that in ten years after the system was fully established, (from being an importing country,) we annually exported 85,000 quarters of corn; and in ten years more an average of 235,000 quarters: we nevertheless greatly increased our general exports during this period; and augmented the balance of trade in our favour, (a great proof of internal industry,) to twenty-six times its amount. This was performed notwithstanding the taxes raised upon the people were nearly trebled; and the country was engaged in two of the most expensive wars, it had ever carried on.

§ 23. Here then we see, besides the demands for people, enumerated in the former periods, many of which operated now in an increased ratio; that a very great additional demand took place for labour in the cultivation of the soil; which, if a redundant population had not afforded a supply of men to answer

it, must either have been neglected, to the great detriment of the country; or must have withdrawn them from other occupations, where they were both usefully, and profitably employed: which would have been just so great a subtraction from the general prosperity then enjoyed.

§ 24. During the wars of Anne, though foreign commerce was necessarily depressed, internal trade and manufactures flourished. After the peace of Utrecht, our exports again rose near a million, beyond their highest amount at any former time; and the balance of trade in our favour had increased one third since the Revolution.

§ 25. The amount of the money, collected under the Poor Laws, still preserved its proportion, both to this increase of trade, and to that of population. The annual amount of the rates, at the death of Queen Anne, was calculated at a million: and the population was estimated at near seven millions.

§ 26. Now, should any one be inclined to suppose, that the redundant population, evidently existing from the Revolution, to the

death of Queen Anne, arose from the demand only; and to agree without reserve, in Sir Josiah Child's maxim; "Such as our employment is, so many will our people be:" let him recollect what was stated for his consideration, in the last chapter, with respect to the influence of the actual demand for labour upon population; and the fact stated in this, of the insufficiency of the wages of labour to support a large family; (a circumstance which still continued during this whole period.) He may then perhaps correct his judgment so far, as to think the assistance of the Poor Laws necessary to establish the truth of that axiom, (in a country advancing fast in riches and power,) by providing an extra number of men to be ready for any increase of employment.

§ 27. The men, who fought the battles of William III. navigated the ships, and wrought the manufactures in his time; who conquered with Marlborough, or fought under Rooke, in the succeeding reign, must have been born, some about the Restoration, others in the twenty years immediately succeeding that event: when a demand did certainly exist for labour; but by no means capable of raising the wages of it enough to

counteract the high price of corn at that period; to encourage an extraordinary number of marriages; or to enable the heads of families to rear, without extraneous assistance, so large a number of children, as we find, (from the experience of their various operations when men,) were then actually brought up.

§ 28. Nor should the smallness of the sum then raised under the rates, compared with these its effects, create any doubt that this extraneous assistance was thus afforded; if we consider that the operation extends far beyond the actual maintenance bestowed. Many a man, not able to support a family at the Restoration, may have married, and had children, under the guarantee of indemnity held out by the Poor Laws; who, from the increasing prosperity of the country, might have so bettered his condition, as to rear this offspring without assistance. Not to notice the effect stated in a former section, which the relief of one or two children in a family has on the condition of the rest.

§ 29. For the fifty years succeeding the death of Queen Anne, the commerce, ma-

actures, and population, appear to have anced more slowly than in the last pe- ds we have been considering. This may ve been the result of two causes: first; superior attention paid to agriculture, hich continued as long as that part of the ds, set free at the Revolution, of staple od enough to pay a larger profit than mmerce, remained uncultivated,) might ve diverted the pursuits of many from mmercial enterprise. The effect of this version must certainly have been, to check e rapidity of increase in population: because s manual labour was requisite in the em- oyments of agriculture, than in manufac- res, before these last were much assisted machinery *.

§ 30. The second reason for the comparative glect of commerce at this time, it is the ovince of history to explain. It may per- aps be resolved into this proposition; that e were more attentive in securing the po- ical advantages gained by the Revolution;

* Machinery is now brought to such a state of perfec- n, that in all probability an equal number of hands will, nerally speaking, produce as large a value in manufactures, in agriculture.

in settling the balance of power in Europe, and preserving certain interests on the continent; than in application to the concerns of our commercial prosperity *.

§ 31. The neglect of these last however, was only comparative: they did by no means languish: for the exports had increased to about twelve millions at the close of George the Second's reign; and the population to near eight millions.

§ 32. The Poor's Rates, during these fifty years, had been gradually advancing with the increase of industry, and population; but in

* There is not the slightest intention, to stigmatize the reigns of the two first kings of the house of Hanover, as an æra unfortunate for England; quite the contrary. In some periods of them, our national prosperity increased very rapidly; and when it was otherwise, the causes which prevented our progress, might very possibly be those likewise, which laid the foundation of the astonishing prosperity of the present reign. The statement in the text, which was absolutely necessary, to the discussion of the subject in hand, is intended merely to account for the fact, which is undeniable; that, taking the whole of the period of those two reigns, our commercial prosperity, and population in general increased less rapidly, than they had done, from the Restoration, to the death of Queen Anne.

a lower proportion: some years after the close of this period, (in 1776,) they amounted only to £1,719,000, a real increase (considering the depreciation of money) of less than one third in sixty years; whereas, the real value of the exports, had more than doubled during that term: and the population had increased above a million. It appears therefore, that the amount of the rates, notwithstanding the slower progress of commerce, and population, still held the same degree of low proportion to their increase, which it did, when they were more rapidly augmented.

§ 33. This observation may fairly induce us, not to give way to the fears entertained by those, who contend, that the Poor's Rates would continue increasing in amount, and creating an useless population, supposing the demand for labour to diminish; an effect that would doubtless be attended by very dismal consequences. Such fears are not justified by experience: on the contrary, it gives us every reason to suppose, that a principle exists in the laws themselves, always operating against this excess. Some of the ingredients of this principle have been

noticed in the last chapter: to which may perhaps be added the restraints, and inconveniences, necessarily incident to the execution of the laws, upon persons, who, though able to labour, find it difficult to get employment; and who, naturally enough, feeling unconscious of any fault, by which they have sacrificed their birthright of liberty, and given up to others the right of controlling their actions, must be indignant at the inteference of magistrates, and overseers in their concerns: this gives rise to complaints *, and upbraidings; which ope-

* That these complaints would likewise operate, in exciting envy against the higher ranks, opposition to the laws, and to those who execute them, is admitted. But this would be the natural effect of the state of society, sinking from prosperity, to adversity, and of the check given to the demand for labour. It could only be ascribed to the Poor Laws, inasmuch as they were instrumental in producing former prosperity, by encouraging population. No doubt, if the Poor Laws had never held out this encouragement, by giving the poor a legal right to all such supply of their wants, as they are themselves unable to procure, these complaints would never have occurred; because that general prosperity, by which our national existence has been preserved, could not then have been achieved: or supposing it could, how much more dreadful would be the complaints of the poor, and their envy against the higher orders, upon a reverse of fortune; were there absolutely no legal resource, from which they might draw that subsistence, which a

rating on the whole neighbourhood, soon produce a check to too rapid an increase *. For with all their want of cultivation, the poor are by no means behindhand with their richer brethren, in the perception of those interests, which affect them most nearly: indeed it is not surprising, considering the few enjoyments within their reach, of a more refined nature, that they should feel peculiarly attached to their habits, and prejudices; that they should consider their interests as deeply concerned in preserving them from violation; and highly value the power they possess of adhering to them.

§ 34. It is one of the most whimsical, and amusing, though sometimes (to those who interest themselves seriously in the

decreasing demand for their labour would disable them from procuring for themselves?

* It is to be understood, that this check is only calculated upon, as operating to the decrease of population, in the same proportion, as the assistance afforded under the Poor Laws is said to promote its increase, by the encouragement to marriage. Every person will form his own judgment of the degree in which the poor are influenced by calculation in their matrimonial connexions? that is, how many of the poor are prudent, and considerate? The author cannot help expressing his opinion that these virtues will always exist in their breasts, in proportion to the degree of education prevalent among them.

concerns of the poor) provoking influences of the freedom of the constitution, upon an English cottager; that it is not enough to convince him even of the real utility to himself and family, of any measure, that clashes with his favourite prejudices: before he will adopt it, you must likewise convince him that he likes it; an undertaking of no very hopeful promise; and generally put an end to by some compendious argument, like the following: "Very likely, Sir, all you say may be true; but I have been used to my old ways, and I like them; so if you please I mean to continue in them." Long may the cause which produces this obstinacy continue to invigorate the system of our society! and we shall have no reason to complain of the little inconveniences to which it may give birth.—To return: The check to population, arising from the example of the disagreeable situation * of men, capable of

* This situation is very different from that of the man, having a family larger than he can support by his labour, and applying for relief for the remainder: *his* earnings are calculated, and the remainder given to him, without interfering at all with his pursuits, and occupations: he has a perfect liberty to employ his labour in what manner and under what master he likes best; and to spend his earnings

work, should it be perceived, that no employment could be found for them, would begin to operate among the more considerate, as soon as the first symptoms of a want of demand for hands appeared; and, as far as the operation extended, would produce its effects, without introducing half the vice and misery, likely to arise from the more positive checks * upon population.

in the manner most agreeable to him, provided it be in the support of his family. There is, indeed, a power given by the laws, to send that part of his children, actually chargeable, to the workhouse; but it is seldom exercised; and a magistrate would not hesitate to make use of the dispensing power he possesses, on such an occasion: because the children must be more properly, as well as more cheaply maintained with the rest of the family. Whereas, a man able to work, applying to his parish for relief and employment for *himself*, gives up every action of his life to the control of another: he is employed in the most disagreeable sort of labour, for which other workmen may with difficulty be found: his dress, his diet, his lodging, all the circumstances, to which men in that rank of life look for comfort in choosing for themselves, are completely regulated by others; and generally of necessity, in a manner not very agreeable to the pauper.

* The more positive checks here alluded to, are the varieties of distress, arising from the decreasing ability of the labourer, to purchase a supply of food, through a *general* want of employment. This must introduce diseases, temptations to robbery, and worse descriptions of vice and misery;

§ 36. This salutary restraint will always operate, in proportion to the strict regulation, and execution of the laws. Hitherto we have never felt a necessity for its very extensive influence; or we might perhaps have found the actual provision and execution of the laws, too loose, to produce more than a very partial effect: but should the necessity occur, it is not difficult to conceive, they might be so framed, as to encourage a surplus population as long as there existed an increasing demand for labour; and to discourage it, as soon as any symptoms appeared, of application for support from the able, and the willing, who had no families to maintain.

§ 37. From the beginning of the present reign, the increase of commerce, manufac-

which may certainly be prevented, in proportion as the Poor Laws have the operation supposed in the text, of giving a more early notice of an approaching decrease in the demand for labour; and of imposing a preventive check upon population, much milder than such positive checks.

The experience of all countries will inform us, that, without such assistance, the moral restraint, *i. e.* the fear of bringing beings into the world, without a prospect of provision for them, does not operate upon the mass of the people, at its first fall from prosperity, till by severe pressure, and much misery, the hopelessness of that prospect becomes very evident to their senses.

tures, navigation, agriculture, exports, and population, has been so wonderful, and rapid beyond all example, that it must form an æra of itself. In the very beginning of this period, we added eight new colonies to our foreign dominions; to which great sums were carried, and many people emigrated*; to say nothing of our immense acquisitions in India. Yet notwithstanding these drains, in the course of fourteen years, manufactures were augmented, navigation extended, and the fisheries, foreign and domestic, flourished to such a degree, that the annual amount of the tonnage of British shipping, had increased during those years 150,000 tons, and the exports above a million sterling: so large a portion of fresh capital, and population were nevertheless employed in the augmentation of agriculture, that no less than 702 acts of Parliament were passed, for dividing, and enclosing waste lands, and commons; and draining bogs and marshes: which, taking an average of 200 acres of fresh land, brought under cultivation by each enclosure, will give an addition of above 140,000 acres

* By the peace of 1763 we retained Canada, Louisiana, Florida, the Grenades, Tobago, St. Vincent, Dominica, and Senegal.

to the productive power of the land. Astonishing effects of the operation of an overflowing population upon unbounded resources! enabling us to acquire such a mass of political, physical, and financial power, that in the long, and expensive war which followed, we added 150,000 tons to our military navy; and therefore, though not without danger, and a violent contest, broke the conjoined fleets of France, Spain, and Holland. We were enabled to borrow sums creating 110 millions additional stock to the funded debt; and though from mismanagement, and other causes, our commercial navigation was much impeded by numerous enemies; we lost no part of our exports, but those to the revolted colonies; (which, as will soon be seen, were recovered twofold;) and even gained an accession of trade to other parts of the world. So that, upon the whole, if we also consider the numerous articles requiring labour, for which an extensive war itself creates a demand, it does not appear, that the employment of men was at all diminished, at home, or abroad, in naval or civil pursuits: yet such were the resources still remaining in the population, that both the Indies, Europe in several parts, Africa, and America, at one

and the same time, witnessed the presence of our fleets, and the debarkation of thousands of our gallant countrymen on their shores; forces, that were drawn from that part of the population, in age the most efficient.

§ 38. The amount of the Poor's Rates, which contributed to rear the population thus employed, had now increased to £2,130,000: a sum which, considering the depreciation of money, may be considered as very little superior to that raised under them ten years before. This circumstance may be accounted for, by observing, that employment for men at home, during that period, increased so little, as to create but a small addition to the heads of families, and consequently to the subjects upon which the Poor Laws chiefly operate: the only addition to the charge upon them probably arose, from supporting the families of persons absent in their country's service.

§ 39. The event of the American war having, by the *kind assistance* of our *enemies*, fortunately set our commerce, and navigation, free from the clog of American interference;

and their *generous views* for the *destruction* of our *manufactures*, and *commerce*, and the *downfall* of our power, having converted a dangerous rival to our national shipping, into a commercial correspondent, (at present taking our goods to the value of seven millions;) and transferred from them to us, most of the valuable fisheries; we find our career of prosperity rapidly accelerated. A cursory view of the increase in the old sources of wealth, and the variety of new ones, in which our overflowing population enabled us to engage, in the eight years of peace which followed, will inform us; that the national shipping gradually increased from about a million, to fourteen hundred thousand tons; the exports from £17,000,000, to £25,000,000; (Custom-house value;) and the balance of trade in our favour, from less than a million, to near five millions. The capital, and labour employed on land, increased in the same proportion: and our immense foreign possessions in every climate, were filled with English proprietors, and their dependents, in search of those fortunes, which, when brought home, have formed a considerable resource, in the means of resistance against the im-

placable enemy, with whom we have been ever since contending.

§ 40. But of all the periods of our history, since the establishment of the Poor Laws, that of the present eventful contest, is best calculated to illustrate the power, and advantages, derived to the country from the system, endeavoured to be recommended to the good-will of the public in this Inquiry. Driven, in the outset of the contest, by the overbearing force of the enemy, from all those means of protection against his ambition, which our influence among neighbouring states, and the balance of power in Europe, formerly afforded us; we have had little to rely upon, but the energy derived from our population, and internal resources; and the peculiar means of converting these to our aggrandizement, which Providence has placed exclusively in our power; and which have enabled us to keep pace in some degree, with his enormous acquisitions of influence on the continent. In this way chiefly, have we been enabled to make head against a power, so apparently superior; every nerve of which always has been, and always

will be stretched to the utmost, to compass our destruction.

§ 41. In the display of that energy, and those means, we have shewn a spirit, that need make no man ashamed of his country! But if we have been hard pressed in the contest; if we have been obliged to have recourse to numerous contrivances, and many shifts, to make head against the enemy; and at the same time acquire fresh means of resistance, by increasing our internal prosperity; is not this a proof, that all our energy would have been insufficient, to preserve our existence as a nation, had any part of our means been wanting?

§ 42. If while we had numerous and expensive armies of our own growth, fighting our battles, or garrisoning our possessions, in all parts of the world, we had not had a sufficiency left at home; to build, and navigate a million of tons additional shipping; to produce an augmentation of exports, to the value of twenty millions; and to employ on near a thousand additional enclosures; must we not have fallen a prey to the conqueror, through a deficiency of financial re-

sources? and if, with all this employment for men in civil occupations, we had not had population enough left, to man a fleet, larger than that of all our enemies united; and to keep on foot, and supply the deficiencies of an army, which not only protected our own, but conquered and retained the possessions of the enemy; must we not have failed on the side of military exertion?

§ 43. In a word, if we have found our actual supply of men, and money, but just sufficient to keep us on a level with the enemy; and to withstand his exertions to overwhelm us; have we not just reason to conclude, that with a very little less money, or a very trifling diminution in the number of men, we might not have withstood those exertions? What gratitude then ought we to bear, what merit to ascribe, to a system of laws, which, by increasing our population, and by enabling us to perform so many operations at once, has so essentially contributed to our safety, if not to the preservation of our existence? And we surely shall have no cause to complain of being defrauded of our money's worth, even supposing the sum of money raised upon the people, under such

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laws, should be found to be considerably increased.

§ 44. The sum of money actually levied, and expended for the benefit of the poor in 1803, amounted, in round numbers, to £4,234,000; most certainly a very large apparent increase within the last twenty years; amounting to more than double that, actually expended for their relief in 1783. The real causes of this difference, together with the application of the sum, will be thoroughly discussed in future chapters: it is sufficient at present, that we have seen the increase of the Poor's Rates, never bearing an equal proportion to that of the ability of the country to pay it; but that, on the contrary, the proportion has been continually diminishing. Though the partial imposition of the burthen at this moment, exacts from those exclusively bound to pay it, a sum equal to more than two shillings in the pound on their actual profits; yet, if distributed equally throughout every species of profits in the community, the charge would not amount to a sum, equal to more than seven-pence * in the pound;

* The calculation upon which this assertion is founded will be given at length in a future chapter.

which proportion might still further decrease, as improvement in skill, and machinery, may produce larger profits with less labour.

§ 45. We have now followed our country, from its first emergence into agricultural and commercial consequence, from poverty and slavery, to its present state of progressive prosperity: and have seen the sums raised by the Poor Laws, and the consequences * produced by them growing with its growth, and strengthening with its strength.

§ 46. One argument more occurs, as necessary to establish the share they have had, in the production of this prosperity. It has been already in part noticed, and may indeed

* With respect to the nature of those consequences, that is, of the effects, which the rapid increase of wealth, and power, has had upon the political welfare, and individual happiness, of the people of England; different opinions may perhaps be entertained. The author cannot avoid having a very decided one; that if liberty and independence are any ingredients in welfare and happiness; scarcely any period has existed, since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in which the security of those blessings from foreign violence, and internal ambition, has not depended upon that increase.

rather be called an answer to an objection, that may possibly be made.

§47. It maybe said, that though true it is, the Poor's Rates have gradually kept pace in their increase, with the commerce, and population of the country; yet that they have in no degree been the cause, but only the consequence of those events: that in proportion to the prevalence of riches and luxury, greater idleness, and vice, and of course greater want, and misery, will abound among the lower orders; and thus create a larger demand on the rates on this account: while the increase of people, must of course create a proportionate increase of demand for relief, from the infirm and disabled.

§ 48. The last part of this observation is unquestionably true; but the extent of relief to the infirm, and disabled, as will appear from inspecting the returns before Parliament, bears a small proportion, to the whole sum expended; the number of those persons being only a seventh part of the whole receiving relief.

§ 49. As to the rest of the objection, it must be observed first: that it entirely puts out of the question, the encouragement to marriage, and the money spent in rearing children; which we see, by the original wording of the act 43d Eliz. ("shall set to work all children whose parents shall not be thought able to maintain them;") did then form, and as the returns shew, and every acting magistrate knows, does still form, a very large proportion of that raised under the rates. Secondly, to give this objection any force, it ought certainly to be shewn, that these idle people full of want and misery, that is, people able to work, but not willing, have constantly existed, and been supported out of the rates; which is very far from having been the case to any great extent.

§ 50. With respect to former times, we find, that, notwithstanding the incontestable proofs existing, of the large gradual increase of people since the Restoration; various authors, who have written on the subject of politics, from that period, down to Dr. Price, framing their accounts from mistaken calculations, or from the mere surface of things, as presented to their confined view; and

§ 52. Whatever may be the case in great towns, we certainly have not, in the country, any number of sturdy pensioners on the Poor's Rates, who are in fact able to support themselves, and their families. Master-workmen the slaves of their journeymen, through a daily dread of their departure; farmers, at their busy times, in want of labourers; and recruiting serjeants, with guineas in their pockets, but no men upon their muster-rolls; are living testimonies of the truth of this observation: or at least, that if any capable of working do receive relief, it is not the fault of the laws, but of a gross neglect in their execution, which evidently cannot exist to a considerable extent.

§ 53. It will readily occur to the reader, that the arguments used in favour of population, and the Poor Laws, are not meant to apply to England, as a nation either exclusively commercial, or agricultural; but as one seeking power and prosperity, wherever it may be found; which no doubt, after a certain point in the cultivation of the lands is arrived at; or with any discouragement to

before a magistrate, soon found his tongue, and was discovered to be a very proper subject, to fight the battles of his country, on board His Majesty's fleet.

agriculture existing, and not easily removed; must generally be sought in commercial enterprise. Many there are, no doubt, who think we have pushed that enterprise, and the spirit of manufacturing too far; but let them ask themselves; What should we now be, had we confined our exertions within the moderate limits of agriculture, and internal trade? Mature reflection upon that question, will give them reason to rejoice, that we are now advanced too far in the career, to leave any option as to the attempt, (which some might recommend;) of treading back our steps; at least while Europe holds any thing like its present aspect.

§ 54. The continental power, possessing most influence in Europe, has hitherto been, and it is feared, must in future continue to be, our implacable enemy; because the freedom of our constitution, and the independence, and security of the state, (the happy results of our insular situation,) have always been a powerful bar to the ambitious designs of other countries: it was so, while Spain domineered on the continent, and is so, now that power has been transferred to France. In proportion therefore, as any one continental power

increases its force, by overwhelming its neighbours, in such proportion must we, (if we mean to avoid being overwhelmed likewise,) enlarge, and make use to the utmost, of all those means, which Providence has placed within our reach, to raise ourselves up to the same level. If our implacable enemy goes on adding kingdom to kingdom, and declaring them integral parts of his imperial, or federative system; let us go on adding colony to colony, and where they appear of vital importance to our commercial interests, declare them integral parts of our imperial, and commercial system. If he shall use his power, and influence, to shut the ports of the Continent against our trade; what remains, but that we in return, open in other places, where our commanding navy gives us means, other ports, and other markets, out of the control of his envy, and despotism *? It is the only measure of defence

* Let us hope however, that our eagerness for these acquisitions, will never carry us beyond the legitimate object of an outlet for our manufactures; or the enrichment of individuals: that we shall have no royal gold-mines, introducing a revenue independent of the people; and from other sources than their industry. Let the example of Spain be a warning to Britain!

we have; and thank God! a most effectual one, in producing a revenue, and population sufficient to enable us to cope with him.

§ 55. Nature, in circumscribing the limits of our ambition as to conquest by land in Europe, has given us a sea-coast equal to that of half that Continent; and by opening the ocean to us at every point of the compass, has pointed out our true and natural road to greatness. But she has besides given us a pledge of firmness, and durability, which she never yet bestowed on any commercial nation in the world; she has provided an extent of territory, sufficient to set at nought all permanent dependance on foreign countries, either for food, or raw materials: which, if we improve it to those beneficent purposes, for which it was doubtless bestowed, will supply all the demands of our population, and manufactures, and of ship-timber for commerce, and defence.

§ 56. Hitherto we have not, upon the whole, made an idle, or ungrateful return to the goodness of Providence,

"Esseda festinant, pilenta, petorrita, *naves*;"

not charged with gaudy trophies*, plundered from the before peaceful cities of conquered, or exterminated nations, to glut the eyes of a fastidious, and degenerate populace; but loaded with the produce of just, and legitimate exchange; the pledge of the industry, and therefore of the happiness of all the parties concerned. And whoever considers, that the sixth part of England, one half of Scotland, and at least as large a proportion of Ireland, (in all more than thirty millions of acres,) have never been touched by the hand of man; that thriving colonies are advancing in riches, and population, in all parts of the world, to take off the raw materials, to be raised on those lands, to any extent their manufacture can be carried; he may perhaps be inclined to agree, that, by persevering in our present system, we shall find full employment for some cen-

* The "*Captivum portatur ebur,*" may, now and then to be sure, be applied to us. It was not a disagreeable sight to the populace of London, on the 20th September 1806, to behold six large waggon-loads of Spanish dollars, surmounted with trophies, drawn under the windows of a house; on the balcony of which, stood the wife of the officer whose enterprise, and ability, were chiefly conducive to the capture of the settlement, where they were taken as prize.

turies, even supposing our advancement to proceed as rapidly, as it has hitherto done.

§ 57. It may, to be sure, be mathematically demonstrated, that, by a continual progress in improvement, we must, some time or other, come to the end of our resources; and that the faster we advance, the nearer we shall be to that end. What is this, but proving that human affairs are not calculated for eternity? that this world and its kingdoms shall pass away like a shadow? But was it ever allowed to be fair reasoning, that because we cannot, by the constitution of the world, enjoy temporal advantages to all eternity, we shall not therefore make every possible improvement in our present situation? That we are to deny the present and succeeding generations, the chance of happiness, and prosperity, in the vain hope of arrogating to ourselves the foresight of Providence in its care of after-ages? No! we must be content under the conviction, that every human establishment, the world itself perhaps, has within it the seeds of its decay: but, while the nations of the world continue, as they have hitherto been, engaged in struggles against each other;

reason, and experience shew, that those will be most lasting, who are most powerful: and religion may induce *us* to hope, that where the foundations of power are laid in the virtue, and happiness of the governed, Providence will, by means of its own finding out, bless that nation with a still more durable dominion.

§ 58. The Romans conquered the world by the force of their civil and military institutions: those of Britain, though not wanting in the production of military energy, derive their chief force from their moral effects on the liberty, and happiness of those, who have the good fortune to live under them: to be embraced, they require only to be known. And as the policy and the sword of Rome established a tyranny over the *persons* of the ancient world: let us hope that the laws and institutions of Britain, may produce a milder, and more lasting dominion, over the hearts, and affections of the modern race of mankind.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE HUMANITY OF THE POOR LAWS, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT MIGHT SUGGEST CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS IN THEM.

§ 1. THERE is no feeling more contemptible in the mind of a man, than that sickly species of humanity, which indulges its feelings at the expense of its judgment; and affects a want of power to resist doing a seemingly generous action, though convinced that its ultimate tendency is injurious. The manliness with which the author of the Essay on Population has exposed himself to the chance of reproach, by censuring this weakness, is a quality of his book very worthy of admiration. It has induced him to recommend certain restraints upon the exercise of benevolence, which he must have foreseen could not avoid shocking, at first sight, the generous feelings of his countrymen. They have accordingly exposed him to much unmerited obloquy from some; and have drawn forth from others certain epithets, which

have very justly excited his complaints: for every one, who will take the trouble of entering into the scope of his arguments, must plainly perceive the passages objected to, to be intended for the regulation, not the extinction of our charity; and to be clearly calculated, according to his system, to promote the happiness of mankind.

§ 2. It is however a matter of great joy to those, who differ with him in opinion, as to the application of the system to this country, to feel a conviction, that in indulging the finer feelings of the heart, they are at the same time promoting the best interests of their country: that in encouraging marriage, and as they believe happiness, and morality, among the lower orders; in assisting women at a time when they are most of all in need of comfort, and support; and in helping them to rear their children in soundness of body and mind; they are employed in preparing the instruments of their country's welfare and prosperity, and not sowing the seeds of want, vice, and misery: that in rescuing the trembling limbs of age from cold and wretchedness, they are not bestowing upon idleness the encouragements due only to virtue, and

ıdustry. It must be peculiarly grateful too o the magistrate,

> " Quem pauper ambit sollicitâ prece
> Ruris colonus,"——

o know, that he is not making a sacrifice of ıis time, his tastes, and his amusements, in ı mere show of benefit to his fellow-creatures; but that he is really, and substantially labouring for their temporal, and eternal happiness.

§ 3. If then the arguments we have met with in the foregoing chapters, are sufficient to convince us of some of these truths; let us now consider to what extent the Poor Laws in their present shape really contribute to those humane purposes, the policy of which we admit; and whether any improvements may be suggested, by which they may be rendered more efficient in the production of their beneficial effects.

§ 4. First, we will inquire into that part of the sum raised, which is applied more emphatically to purposes where humanity is chiefly concerned; in the support of the aged, infirm, and disabled; who either never

capable of labour through inflictions of Providence, disabled by accidents, or worn out in the service of the public, are become pensioners upon it for their entire subsistence. Of these the returns laid before the House of Commons in 1804 state an amount of 166,000: (about a fiftieth part of the whole population; and a seventh part of the number of persons receiving relief:) the expense of maintaining these paupers, taking the average cost of each at three shillings a week per head, may amount to £1,294,800; considerably less than a third part of the sum raised for the exclusive purpose of maintaining the poor. No person has ever yet been bold enough to assert positively, that these unfortunate beings should be abandoned without discrimination "to starve and rot among themselves." Though many have advised, that they should be left to the operation of private charity; the unfairness of which expedient has already been shewn. Besides, should the burthen be found too heavy for the shoulders of that part of the community, upon whom it would thus be exclusively thrown, the ultimate consequence to the wretched objects must clearly be that alluded

to; which no one dares to own, and none, let us hope, to wish.

§ 5. But it is said, this certain provision in old age prevents the savings of industry in youth, and thereby promotes extravagance, where frugality is most requisite. That this is the case, in some respects, cannot be denied; but to establish the assertion generally, it must first be shewn, that a labourer has it in his power to lay up money, supposing the country to reap all the advantages from him, which he is capable of affording. If he marries young, contributes his earnings, as far as they will go, towards bringing up a large family, and works at low wages, it will not be very easy for him to make many savings. To exemplify this more fully: suppose a labourer to earn the amount of the average wages of the country, (say ten shillings per week, and his wife three shillings;) and that there are four children to support: bread is seldom lower than one shilling the quartern loaf, and it has been determined by the magistrates of Berks, with much apparent reason, that a family cannot subsist upon less, than the amount of two such loaves for each individual per week,

upon an average, for food only; let them lay out the money as economically as possible: here then is twelve shillings out of the thirteen expended, on the account of mere food: it may be supposed how inadequate the remaining shilling is, to procure clothing, liquor, furniture, and other smaller necessaries for six persons; besides the payment of house-rent, a charge which is indeed sometimes set against extraordinary earnings in harvest.

§ 6. How is it possible, that a man in such circumstances should make any savings, or even be able to support his family without extraneous assistance? and who can deny, that humanity is equally interested with policy, that such assistance should be granted? that when his time for labour is past, and years begin to depress his spirits, and relax his energies; he should receive a decent subsistence from that public, which he has enriched by his labour, and strengthened by the addition of his family to its population?

§ 7. All however have not these demands upon their earnings: many there are, who, it is supposed, might lay up considerable savings, if they were not tempted into the

enjoyment of present gratifications, by the prospect of assistance from the rates, in case of accidents, or natural decay. It must be confessed, that this accusation is in many instances but too true: it is an evil attendant upon the benefit, which has not yet been removed; but which might be cured without annihilating the laws themselves, and thereby losing their advantages likewise. No law can possibly be calculated upon such principles, as to take in every possible case, and obviate all inconveniences: it must have a principal object in view, which, if generally answered, should not be given up in the hope of theoretic perfection; or for the sake of obviating petty irregularities, which in a large and complex society can scarcely be guarded against by any general measure.

§ 8. If the Poor Laws keep wages low, and nevertheless encourage early marriages, and promote population, by holding out a prospect of support in old age; these benefits should not be thrown away, because a few men have found out the means to turn some of the provisions of the laws to their own advantage, and to the prejudice of the public. This evil, on the con-

trary, should become the subject of other laws; and both humanity and policy are interested in its correction; for the spirit of true benevolence can never consist with any measure tending to produce idleness, imprudence, or extravagance. A principal ingredient in any plan for the correction of this abuse should be the counteraction of a disadvantage, the poor peculiarly labour under, which has a prominent place among the causes that tempt them to improvidence. Those most conversant with their concerns, well know the difficulty they find, in laying out their little savings with such security, as it is very natural they should wish to have a full conviction of, before they put out of their own possession the hard earnings of many a weary hour *.

§ 9. The first obvious place of deposit is the neighbouring country bank: but as the

* It has been observed to the author, that the improvidence of those who save, is nearly equal to that of those who do not save; that they generally lend their money to the first person who asks them, with scarcely a thought bestowed upon the security. If this be so, it can only arise from ignorance, and the want of some general place of deposit for their earnings, whence they may depend upon the future enjoyment of the benefit of them, to themselves or their families.

petty sums, and dealings of the poor are above the notice of the more substantial and respectable of these institutions, they are necessarily obliged to resort to the inferior, and less responsible establishments; where it is to be feared their ignorance of the nature of pecuniary transactions, is now and then perhaps taken advantage of to their prejudice; and sometimes, the failure of the bank deprives them at once of their little all. The example of a few instances of this nature, will have a most pernicious effect on an extensive neighbourhood; and will in some degree justify the poor in exclaiming;—Since my money may not be secure if I lay it out to-morrow, I will at least make sure of its enjoyment by spending it to-day.

§ 10. To remedy such inconveniences as these, many persons have recommended the general, and compulsory establishment of friendly societies; to which scheme serious, and indeed insurmountable objections have been made; but the same difficulties do not seem to occur, in the establishment of offices in every county by government; where a proportion of the earnings of such as choose to bring them, should be

received from time to time; and so applied under the faith of Parliament, that it should be at the option of the depositor, either to enjoy all the advantages of a benefit society, under such rules and regulations, as should be fixed upon; or feel the certainty of the money's being laid out in any manner he may direct; and that it will be forthcoming on demand. This would at least secure the savings of the poor from the dangers arising from the ignorance of the possessors, and the misfortunes or knavery of those, with whom they must otherwise be deposited; and would besides offer several minor advantages, such as avoiding the customary expenses at public-houses, incident to other friendly societies, which must be apt to induce too great a familiarity with those tempting receptacles of the idle.

§ 11. It has been communicated to the author by a humane, and well-informed friend; that "a friendly society has been lately established at Henley upon Thames; one rule of which is, that they should not meet at the public-house;—it is but justice to add, that this seems to be one obstacle to its success:—whilst a society in the same town, which does meet at the public-house,

flourishes, though evidently formed upon those erroneous calculations, which are the true cause of the ultimate failure of those societies." This fact would seem to prove, that in consequence of the prospect of assistance at present held out by the Poor Laws, the desire of making an independent provision for old age and sickness, is not strong enough in the mind of that part of the poor who *can* make savings, to induce them to act upon it, without the additional temptation, of frequent meetings at the public-house: a custom, that too often accelerates the approach of want, and infirmities; and renders nugatory the good effects otherwise to be expected from the society.

§ 12. If the offices recommended were established, they might at once be the means of putting a period to the abuse above alluded to; and to that practised by persons, who notwithstanding a life passed in idleness and debauchery, by quartering themselves upon the parish, partake of that legal provision, which should be the lot only of the praiseworthy and industrious. Every man with a smaller family than a wife and two children, may be fairly esteemed able to afford a small

sum from his earnings, to be laid by as a stock for futurity. By the foregoing calculation it appears that the food would amount to a charge of eight shillings in such a family; the remaining five shillings must be considered fully sufficient to supply all other wants: it could therefore be no hardship upon a man, having one child less, to contribute something, and still less on one having neither wife nor child. But since compulsory contribution should, as before observed, be cautiously avoided, a free option should be left to every one, to contribute to such offices or not; taking into consideration the relative advantages of the two lines of conduct.

§ 13. At the same time it would be perfectly fair to provide, by a law reciting the establishment of the offices, that no man should, at any age, or under any circumstances, be entitled to relief from the rates, (after a sufficient time had elapsed to make the money subscribed productive,) unless he should bring a certificate of his having brought up two children* to a certain age; or it should ap-

* It would be a matter for mature deliberation, how far a man with a family should be relieved, supposing him never to have contributed to the fund before his marriage, or the birth of his children.

pear, that he was actually charged with the maintenance of a larger number. Till the fund established, became sufficiently productive to provide entirely for the subscribers in sickness or infirmity, relief should only be granted in proportion to the deficiency in the produce of the fund. It would then be established, that if a man preferred squandering his money in extravagance, while unincumbered, and in vigour, to placing a small proportion, where he might be certain it would operate in producing independence in his old age; the state would not charge themselves with the consequences of his vices, but would absolutely leave him to the chances of private charity. For public charity should be founded in principles of strict justice; while that of individuals "suffereth long, and is kind; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things *."

* Notwithstanding these offices, the same liberty which now exists, of establishing benefit societies, should be continued; and it would be a great improvement in those societies, were honorary members, (who would never look to personal benefit from them,) generally admitted upon their books. The government offices should only come in aid of them, in situations, and for purposes, where the societies would

§ 14. Many minor regulations might be adopted, with respect to refunding a part of the deposited sum on marriage; the admission of females; of children paid for by others; and in various respects, to make the institution of such offices add to the comforts of the poor.

§ 15. Thus, without interfering with marriage, and population, would the rates be eased of all the sums, which operate only in replacing those, at present squandered in idleness, and extravagance; and the Poor Laws, without the loss of any of the benefits arising from them, would be freed from the reproach of encouraging idleness and vice, against the clearest dictates of humanity as well as policy.

§ 16. If any one should be startled at this restraint of assistance from the public to married men with families, on the ground that it would operate as a new, and too great encouragement to population, by tempting

be inefficient. Generally speaking, the poor should certainly be as much as possible encouraged, to make provision for themselves, without extraneous interference. It adds much to their own satisfaction to do so.

persons to *qualify themselves* for relief by marriage; let him consider the relative advantages of the bachelor, and married man, under this system; and he will soon be convinced, that those of the latter are not sufficient to induce a man to marry, unless otherwise inclined to it *. The single man, who can support himself on half his earnings, would have to contribute perhaps a twelfth part of them to the fund, and would therefore have five twelfths remaining, which he might conscientiously spend on his own amusements, and gratifications: whereas the married man, though he would contribute nothing to the fund, would not (with the supposed family) have one farthing to expend on any gratifications independent of that family.

§ 17. There is another measure which has undergone much discussion, and created a great difference of opinion as to the expediency of its general adoption; viz. the endowment of cottages with land: the difficulties of which might perhaps be very much recon-

* It is evident, that it is the encouragement to such *only*, which could fairly be laid to the charge of the new regulation.

ciled, by regulating the measure so as to be a reward of virtue, and industry, and not an indiscriminate donation to persons taken by chance from the mass of the poor.

§ 18. Generally speaking, there is so little elasticity of mind about men in that situation of life, that before habits of industry, and the sweets arising from them are fully established in their minds, the procuring a subsistence with little labour, will be a greater object in their estimation, than the enjoyment of more comforts attended with harder work: in which case, an indiscriminate erection of cottages with land, or addition of land to cottages, by facilitating the tenants' means of procuring a subsistence, without adding their full share of labour to the common stock of the community, could not but have an injurious tendency. It would reduce them to the situation of poor living on the edges of commons and forests, usually *, the most profligate, and

* Exceptions, however, to this observation certainly exist; where the poor have enjoyed, for any length of time, the peculiar advantages of well-directed attention to their concerns, from their pastor, or a magistrate. The author feels peculiar gratification in recording (for general example) an instance within his own knowledge; where in a large parish, on the edge of the extensive forest of Windsor, the regular

degenerate of the species. This reasoning seems undeniable, notwithstanding many benevolent country gentlemen have been found to confer the greatest benefits, and have increased both the moral, and industrious habits of the poor, (besides considerably lowering the rates in their parishes,) by attaching three or four acres of land on lease, at a fair rent, to the cottages on their estates. The reason, why in this case the measure has been found beneficial, seems to be; that the labourers who tenant the bargains, have been selected under the eye of the landlord, from among the most deserving; are continually the object of his observation, and care; and are aware that they hold the advantage only so long, as they do justice by their moral, and industrious conduct to his good intentions in granting it.

attention of the incumbent, who is likewise an active magistrate, has rendered the poor of his parish a splendid exception to the general observation in the text.

It is hoped the circulation of such a fact, will excite others to emulation in the same career of benevolence, by the proof it exhibits, that even the most unfavourable local circumstances may be overcome by active charity, and a strict performance of duty.

§ 21. But if means could be devised, by which the public might have security, that the tenants of any land, it might find funds to appropriate to the use of cottagers, should be the most sober, and praiseworthy of its peasants; should be industrious in the cultivation of their allotment; that the measure should give no material interruption to the supply of labour for the general stock; and at the same time operate in diminishing the rates, by holding out an encouragement to parents, to strain every nerve in bringing up their children without relief; undoubtedly the great difficulties in the way of the measure would be cleared away.

§ 22. Let us consider then, how far these objects would be attained, by the gradual apportionment of a certain quantity of waste land in every district, into lots of three or four acres; to be held, with a good but small* cottage (to be erected, or already existing thereon,) in priority, by such labourers, as shall have brought up three children, or more, to a certain age: who shall moreover have

* The cottages should be small, that room might not exist for the residence of large families formed by relations of the tenant.

provided them with such a portion of instruction, as may seem good to the legislature: and have placed two at least in respectable services, employments, or apprenticeships: with a further condition that this shall have been performed without any assistance from the rates. These men might be tenants for their own lives, and that of their widow, the mother of such children *. The benefit

* It has been suggested to the author, that difficulties in practice might arise, from the establishment of this order of succession, on the following grounds: "the parents would be very desirous of the benefit descending to their family; one of whom at least would be always kept at home, to retain possession on the demise of the parents. So that for the parish to put the successor into possession, would often be attended with all the vexations of an ejectment." A parish has been pointed out experiencing this, in the case of a number of cottages, which were bequeathed to it; and are now, in many instances, descending from father to son in despite of the parish. This is a very natural consequence, where the value of the tenure is not equal to the law expenses of an ejectment. But in the case of the cottages recommended in the text, these expenses might be dispensed with; for it does not appear, that there would be greater hardship, or vexation, in subjecting those, who should illegally hold possession of them, to a very simple, and summary process of ejectment, and a punishment besides; than would arise from forcibly turning out of an hospital a recovered patient, who should insist upon still retaining the situation and comforts, due only to those in want of medical assistance. It

not only by the support given to the actual tenants, but by the spirit raised in all the expectants: since the view of the comfort and happiness the first were enjoying, would be a continual spur to the last to use every exertion of industry, frugality, civility to their superiors, and attention to the education, and morals of their children; that they may themselves be qualified for the same benefit: though for reasons before detailed it would give no encouragement to marrying to those not otherwise inclined to it.

§ 24. The quantity of land likewise brought into cultivation by such a measure, and kept in a state as productive as the nature of the soil would admit*, by persons not creating a correspondent increase of population, could not but have a most beneficial effect upon the state of the markets; by supplying them better with many articles of consumption, which the enlarged scale of modern farming has rendered scarce; and by the absolute

* It is needless to repeat what may be found in so many well-intentioned publications, on the means an industrious, and careful cottager possesses of providing manure, and in other respects turning a few acres of land to the greatest account.

addition it would make to the general stock of provisions.

§ 25. Supposing a number of tenements to be gradually created, and stationed according to the population, and means of finding waste, equal to an average of four to every parish; that each tenement should consist of from four to six acres according to the quantity of waste land in the district. The number of parishes in England being about 10,000, that sum multiplied by 20, the amount of acres in the four tenements at 5 acres each on an average, would give a result of 200,000 acres of land; the produce of which would either be carried to market, or employed to feed those who would otherwise have been obliged to go to market for food; a consideration of no slight weight in the present state of the supply of food in England.

§ 26. That a few difficulties might occur in the appropriation of the waste land, and the remuneration which it might be thought expedient, that one parish possessing no waste, should give to another, or to its lord for the use of theirs; may very possibly be true: but if we are to be prevented from

pursuing objects of general utility, because they interfere with our laziness, and our prejudices; we may perhaps be awakened only when too late to a sense of our folly. It does not appear, that any difficulties would occur here, but such as it would contribute both to individual, and general advantage to disregard.

§ 27. Finally, besides its appeal to the good sense of the country, such a regulation could not fail giving pleasure to every humane mind; by the happiness it would introduce among a great proportion of the peasantry, and the encouragement it would hold out to them, to pursue the only true road to the enjoyment of that happiness. Who that has a heart, could avoid feeling a lively joy at the idea, that he who had laboured hard, and not spared the sweat of his brow, in the pursuit of objects inculcated by religion, and enforced by the promise of everlasting rewards, should even in this world find a haven of repose; where he might pass the evening of his days in comfort, and plenty?

§ 28. A second division of the sum raised under the rates may be made, by the separation of the part applied to the relief of casual-

ties. According to the present provisions of the laws, they are consistent with the plainest dictates of humanity in affording such relief. But the institution of the offices, humbly suggested in the foregoing sections, joined to improvements which might be made in benefit societies, would put an end to any further necessity for it, except in the case of large families.

§ 29. So much for the relief afforded to the aged, infirm, or casually disabled. Let us now see how far humanity is concerned, in the application of the money spent under the laws, in the maintenance of large families, and in bringing up children; which, with very small exception, may be supposed to include the remainder of the sum raised on account of the poor. However men may differ as to policy, none will of course be disposed to deny, that it is more humane to breed up children in the health, and vigour, produced by a proper supply of necessaries, than to suffer their bodies to contract infirmities, and diseases, through want of nourishment, and clothing. But to judge from effects, there are many, who do not think it any duty of humanity to perform the same good office to

their minds. It is hoped the times are now past, when opinions were entertained, that to instruct children to read, and thus give them an opportunity to make themselves acquainted with the principles of religion, and morality, was laying a foundation for atheism, and disaffection to the government.

§ 30. If the mind be open to conviction in proportion to its cultivation, it must always be more easy to eradicate mistaken principles from it, in the same proportion. If therefore there be any force in this objection to the education of the lower orders, it can only arise from an admission of the existence of lamentable want of care in those, whose duty it is to counteract the effects of corruption on the minds of the poor. Undoubtedly teaching a child to read, and then concluding the whole duty to be performed towards him, and that he may be safely left to chance, to make what use may occur of the talent given him, may as well lead to mischief as to good: but it is equally certain that early virtuous impressions, made on the minds of youth, improved by a moderate, though constant care, in refreshing them, will in nine instances

out of ten, preserve their morals from contagion.

§ 31. It would appear incredible to those, who have had no opportunity of making the experiment, how much effect a little good advice, given with temper, moderation, and judgment, and unmixed with the harshness of reproach, sometimes has, even upon those, whose minds are as little humanized as possible by education, or good example; who have passed the whole of their life in distant parts of heaths, or forests; removed from the reach of instruction on the seventh day, and neglected on the other six. How much greater then will be the facility of keeping those in the straight path, who, instead of having contracted early, and inveterate habits of deviation from it, have been from infancy instructed in the line of their duty; who bring to the cultivator a soil, already prepared to receive, and to produce a plentiful harvest from, the seed he may sow in it?

§ 32. Now, as a great share of the property of the country is set apart for the support of persons, whose duty it is, to prevent the entrance of bad principles into the minds of

the poor, and to eradicate them when there; does not the policy of him who would leave the minds of poor children in brutish ignorance, to prevent their being corrupted, cast the most bitter reflections upon the neglect, and apathy of those, who, if there be any justice in the reasoning on which it is founded, so shamefully neglect the duty for which they are paid? And may not his advice in fact fall under the same imputation, as if one should recommend to a gentleman, who had hired a gardener, and several under-gardeners at a high price, to leave his garden uncultivated, for fear it should be overrun with weeds?

§ 33. Fortunately however for the rising generation of England, though this stigma might perhaps attach to some of the clergy in former times; (unless the author has been deceived into false conclusions by peculiar good fortune in his knowledge of persons now in that profession;) the greater part of such as are rising into the active, and honourable situations of it, are fully impressed with the dangers that have been incurred by former neglect; and seem prepared by principle, ability, and a sense of political expediency, to use every exertion in the discharge of their duty. No doubt the future

effects of this laudable spirit, concurring with the exertions of private individuals in promoting the education of the poor, will be found to correspond, in the extent of the benefits received, with that of the virtues exercised in producing them: and they should be an example and strong incentive to the legislature, in its exertions to second so divine an undertaking, by every means in their power.

§ 34. With respect to the method of bringing about a system of general education for the poor; it is very instructive to such as have had an opportunity of inspecting schools established by those individuals, who have given efficacy to their charity by devoting a part of their own time to the instructions bestowed; and have thereby truly *entitled* themselves to the *rewards of charity*, by giving that, which it is a real *sacrifice to them to part with*; to observe the infinitely greater progress made by the children in those schools, than in others existing under testamentary foundations: where trustees are often but too much inclined to satisfy their consciences with thinking, that they have performed all their duty in complying with

the letter of their charter: that having elected officers according to rule, and once pointed out to them their duty; the establishment will without minute inspection, or further trouble, produce the benefits, which were clearly the object of the founders:—an expectation directly contrary to the general experience of mankind; whose alacrity in their duty has always been found to bear a certain proportion, at least, to the interest they have, or the credit they are likely to reap, in its diligent discharge. The different effects of the two systems are accordingly sufficiently apparent. From schools of the first description we see emerging youth of civil, and decent manners, arising from the immediate consciousness of the benefit bestowed upon them; well grounded not in the letter only, but in the true sense and meaning of the language, in which their moral, and religious duties have been imparted to them; consequently fully impressed with their truth, and importance; and endowed with the inestimable benefit of having contracted early habits of industry, decorum, and subordination.—Whereas from those of the latter description, (let it not be deemed harsh to record a fault in hopes of procuring its amend-

ment,) too often spring youth of impertinent manners, (arising from the neglect of explaining the real benefits imparted to them by the institution;) well schooled in the mere repetition of those forms of religious, and moral instruction, prescribed by the rules of the foundation; but which the masters unluckily sometimes think it quite unnecessary to pass their time in explaining; because perhaps they "do not find it in the bond," between them, and the trustees, that it is any part of their duty so to do. The consequence of this must be, that the true sense, and meaning of their moral, and religious duties being wanting, the mere words which contain them are about as valuable, as an English Bible to an Hindoo, without an interpreter. Nor can the children imbibe the same habits of industry, decorum, and subordination; because a master paid by a fixed salary, and not dependent upon his own exertions for the success of his school, has a strong temptation to be as fond of holidays as his scholars.

§ 35. Far be from the mind of the author any wish to pass this censure indiscriminately upon all free-schools for the education of the poor! Where an active, and well-meaning

trustee is not interfered with by his brethren; or where the trustees are few, and all active; many of these observations will not apply: some masters too there are, no doubt, who from a superior sense of principle, and the hope of procuring additional scholars, may adopt a different line of conduct: but there is great reason to fear, and some to know, that in too many instances the description is by no means overcharged.

§ 36. The consideration too, of the difference of expense in the two modes of education, is a very powerful motive for preferring the former; since there are good grounds for believing, that, stating a very moderate calculation, at least four times the number of children are usually educated by it at the same expense, that would be incurred in the education of one fourth in the latter mode.

§ 37. Let us hope that the advantages, and disadvantages of these two modes of education, may be the means of pointing out to the legislature a system of public instruction which may (as far as is consistent with enlarged operations) avoid the evils of the one, and embrace all the advantages of the other;

that the partial good already apparent from private charity schools, subject to minute inspection, the consequences of which become every day more apparent, will produce a thorough conviction of the great advantages, likely to arise from a general measure founded on the same principles: and finally, that the comparison of the benefits flowing from the different natures of the foundations of schools, will suggest the necessity of a vigilant, and constant superintendence, by such persons, as it may be thought expedient to point out for that purpose, enforced by penalties, and kept alive by the occasional visitation of some of the higher orders in the state *.

§ 38. The object in view is great, and of the last importance to the interests of policy, and humanity; but, as the subjects to be operated upon are numerous, of various

* In most parishes, some well-educated, and well-disposed persons might be found, willing to undertake the office of guardians to the schools for the poor, and to bestow a constant superintendence. And few incumbents of livings are so fully occupied, as not to be able to afford time for occasional visits of superintendence; which would be a necessary precaution against the admission of improper and schismatic doctrines.

natures, and have a constant natural tendency to counteract the good intended them; it would be perfectly absurd to suppose that the mere letter of an act of Parliament, or the efforts of occasional attention, are sufficient to attain it. We are perhaps too apt to give way to our natural love of ease, on many important political occasions; and to suppose, that when we have inquired into the principles, upon which a measure is founded, and have adopted, or rejected it, according to its merits, our whole duty is performed: whereas a little consideration will convince us, it is then but just begun; we have but laid the foundation of the edifice; and if we refuse the trouble necessary to rear the superstructure, and the constant attention inevitable in keeping all human contrivances from decay; we are likely to reap but little benefit from the trouble already taken. A farmer does not clear his wheat from tares, by declaring they shall not grow there, by informing his bailiff how they may be prevented, or by using the hoe in the intervals of amusement; but by employing labourers over whom a rigid inspection is exercised; and by toiling himself early and late, to see them constantly eradicated: on the least neglect they will

sprout again, and in proportion to the age, and growth of the corn, become more difficult of extirpation.

§ 39. To suggest the details of any particular plan for public instruction, would draw this chapter to too great a length: the mind of the well-disposed part of the public, is fortunately strongly turned to the consideration of the subject; and several highly improved, and excellent plans have been published, pointing out in great detail, measures adapted for the town, the country, and the manufacture: it will be for the combined wisdom of the legislature, to unite such of these, as it may approve; and adapt their application to the situations where they may be found expedient: all that an humble individual can do is to state what may be useful in the situation to which his observation has extended.

§ 40. It appears then that *in the country*, the system of superintendence once established, a few very simple provisions would be sufficient to attain the end proposed. First, the schools should not be too large, or too far removed from the habitations of those,

whose children are to attend. Secondly, the masters might be appointed either by the incumbent, *if resident*, or by the magistrates at their bench; he should have no salary; and his appointment would have no other force, than what may be derived from a knowledge of the opinion, which those appointing him have of his fitness for the situation. Thirdly, he should be paid in proportion only to the number of his scholars; part of his remuneration to come from the pockets of the parents; (excepting of course the case of parish children;) this would not only ensure as far as depends on them, the regular attendance of their children, but (as instruction should not be compulsory) the master would be paid, only in proportion to his diligence, and attention in discharge of his duty. The rest of his remuneration should be paid by the public; which would be the inducement to the parents to send their children: For fourthly, no man should be forced to send his child to school; it would be the readiest way to destroy all the good effects of education, by souring the minds of the parents, and of course injuring the children: compulsion destroys the merit of every benefit in the eyes of an Englishman; nay it

converts it into evil; for it then really becomes a species of oppression. It can scarcely be justified by the common pressure of necessity; which here however does not apply; for it is very well known to those, who have interested themselves in the education of the poor, that the common practice of paying half the price of instruction in private charity schools, will always provide as many scholars as can be educated in the establishment. Both reason and experience will likewise inform us; that however ignorance, or singularity of temper, may operate in the minds of a few parents, when unopposed by counteracting arguments; yet it will be scarcely possible to find any, so brutal, or corrupt, as to deny their children the advantage of education, when it can be had easily, and with scarcely any expense; if the reasons on both sides of the question are (as they certainly ought to be in case of hesitation) fairly laid before them by those whose duty it is to do so.

§ 41. These few regulations are humbly conceived to be founded upon the suggestions of fair probability in theory, fortified by the undeniable test of experience in practice; to be sufficient, with the control of regular in-

spection from authority, to secure the grand object of imparting generally to the peasantry of England, a reasonable degree of instruction; and, if combined with other improvements that have been before suggested, to produce this desirable effect without any addition to the present burthen of expense on the public.

§ 42. The humanity of the Poor Laws has of late years been very conspicuous in the pressing times of scarcity, which have occasionally occurred. During such seasons, when in spite of any degree of prudence, or economy, the number of poor must greatly increase, from the pressure of want ascending higher in the scale of society; and the wants of those before receiving relief are greatly aggravated, by the smaller quantity of food their earnings will purchase; the assistance of these laws has certainly saved the lives of many; and preserved to more fortunate times, a population, which the ravages of such a calamity would otherwise have dreadfully diminished; and would have thereby given a lasting blow to the growing prosperity of the country, by reducing the supply of labour below the demand. But as full consideration is given to this subject, in

a following chapter "On the Supply of Food in England;" and as it is hoped means will be pointed out to prevent, as far as human forecast can, the recurrence of such a calamity; it is needless to enlarge further upon it in this place.

§ 43. The subject of workhouses cannot but enter into any disquisition on the humanity of the Poor Laws. As far as they are intended for the purpose of employing the poor in manufactures, or handicraft work, they will be the subject of future consideration. They are mentioned here only in their more usual capacity of an asylum for the aged, infirm, and disabled; where it is supposed they are maintained cheaper, and more comfortably, than they could be without such a receptacle. In this light both policy and humanity imperiously demand, that they should be confined to as narrow limits as possible: for though in some particular instances, where constant attention, and protection is given to them by persons of a superior rank in life, and of more understanding, than those to whom they are usually intrusted; they may be calculated to be the means of great comfort to the aged, and in-

firm; as that in the late Mr. Gilpin's parish of Boldre is said to be: yet, generally speaking, their inhabitants would be both more comfortably, and more cheaply supported, by being pensioned at the public expense in the families of their friends, and relations; who are usually by no means averse to their admission upon those terms.

§ 44. It appears by the returns before Parliament, that the expense of maintaining a pauper in a workhouse, is near five shillings a week; whereas an old man, or woman may be very well supported out of one, upon three shillings; and in fact they do often compound with the overseer for the liberty of being relieved without going into it, by receiving a much smaller sum *. Workhouses are indeed sometimes held out *in terrorem* to prevent the application for relief; and to promote this end further, are made as disagreeable, and disgusting places of residence, as ingenuity can contrive. By these means perhaps they may sometimes induce those, who

* The author knows several instances, where poor widows, lodging with their relations, have no ostensible means of support, besides *1s. 6d.* a week from the parish.

might be disposed to decline work, though not absolutely disabled, to drain out the last dregs of vigour, before they submit to the necessity of applying for admission*: but humanity can certainly lay claim to no great share in this expedient; nor, if the ultimate tendency is, to reduce them to the state of absolutely disabled paupers, to be maintained at five shillings a week, can policy either justify the plan. How much more humane would it be, to place them with a relation, where they might enjoy the comforts, and cheerful society of a family, to enliven the evening of their days; and where in fact their small remaining strength might be employed in little domestic offices; such as preparing meals, attending children, and other trifling occupations, which at present often keep a stout, and willing pair of hands from the public stock of labour;

* If, in the present state of the Poor Laws, the expedient of terror is a check necessary to prevent idleness; it is a strong additional reason for altering, and placing them on a footing, which would make such policy unnecessary. Idleness is certainly the parent of discontent; but one would think sufficient employment might be found out of workhouses for the old labourer, to prevent his feeling the dissatisfaction arising from that source.

and three or four shillings a week from the earnings of a family? — These increased advantages would be attended with a diminution of the present expense of maintenance for the pauper, to the amount of two fifths.

§ 45. There are however in almost every parish, and under any regulations there still must be in very many, a few individuals, who, from the absolute necessity of their case, must be lodged, and provided for, in some building belonging to the public. Such are those who have been idiots or lunatics from their infancy; whose incorrigible infirmities of temper prevent any one from consenting to admit them within their threshold; or whose bodily infirmities and ailments are of that distressing, or disgusting nature, that it is not fair to expect any, but the very nearest relations, to suffer them as inmates. For the reception of such, and such only, should the workhouse, (considered as a mere asylum,) be applied; and by this restraint of its use, a pregnant source of waste, and sometimes of peculation, would be almost dried up *.

* It is to be understood that this reasoning is not intended to apply to cities and large towns, of the proper regulations

§ 46. These arguments apply still more strongly to the case of those unfortunate beings, usually called parish children. More direct means could scarcely be used to bring about their temporal, and eternal ruin; than to accustom them from their earliest moments of imbibing ideas, to the waste, the filth, the tricks, and the society of the greater part of parish workhouses. The appearance and conduct of those brought up there, fully justify this remark: fortunately the number is not at present very great; as the overseers have in most instances discovered the greater cheapness of boarding them in the cottagers' families.

§ 47. It only remains now before the close of this chapter, to take notice of a sweeping censure, with which the general state of the labouring part of the community has been upbraided; and which strongly affects the humanity of the Poor Laws, inasmuch as they contribute greatly to the production of the effect complained of, by the encourage-

for which the author does not presume to give any opinion; the arguments throughout the book are intended principally, (as far as they relate to specific regulations,) to apply to the country and the smaller towns.

ment they give to population, and consequently to industry in general, as has been before shewn.

§ 48. The reproach alluded to arises from the morbid sensibility of the theoretic philanthropist, who exclaims against the tendency of national opulence, and luxury *, to depress the condition of the poor; and converts the honest and happy state of successful industry, the labour of "a laborious and frugal people ministering to the demands of an opulent and luxurious nation †," into the idea of "ten millions of people condemned to incessant toil, and to the privation of every thing, but absolute necessaries, to minister to the excessive luxuries of the other million ‡." A paraphrase certainly a little overcharged.

* It must not be forgotten, that the word luxury, in the sense in which it is here used, as applied to a nation, is not to be interpreted as meaning any general disposition in the minds of the higher orders, to pleasure, riot, or voluptuousness; but simply to express such a state of riches, and prosperity, as may enable them to abound in superfluities; in splendour of furniture, clothes, buildings, &c. which state, no doubt, adds to the general comforts of the poor.

† Dr. Paley's Moral Philosophy.

‡ Mr. Malthus's Essay on Population.

§ 49. The amelioration of the condition of one rank in the scale of society, will always diffuse itself, more or less, throughout the whole community. But considering luxury as applied to individuals, it seems impossible not to agree with the learned author of the first quotation; that the lower it descends in the scale, the more inconveniences it will produce; and, unless counteracted, the greater check will it give to population: while at the same time, a certain proportion of participation, even by the lowest rank, in the improved situation of the highest, cannot but act as a strong bond of union, by connecting their interests more closely; and in a free state, must operate greatly to its security and welfare, by giving every man his proportionate interest in the public prosperity. As to the happiness of the labourer himself, it seems undeniable that it will always be, in proportion to the paucity of his wants, and the constant regularity of his industry.

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peasantry; if the comparison of the situation, and appearance of the lower orders, with those of other countries, and the mildness of the crimes common here, (lamentable though they are, through the want of the preventive check of education,) compared with the horrible tales of cruelty, that often disgust the criminal tribunals of the continent, and are still oftener *purchased* into oblivion, be not sufficient; let the following fact stand as a compendious refutation of all such philosophy.—Though England has a greater part of its people collected in towns than any nation in Europe; though its manufactures are more numerous, and various, (some consequently unhealthy;) though it has more mines; and from its superior foreign commerce, and fisheries, more mariners exposed to danger on the ocean; yet it is proved by facts, and reasoning, upon which no just doubt can be entertained, that the annual proportion of the number of deaths in England to that of its population, is smaller than in any other country, whatever its pursuits may be, except Norway; a nation which has hardly yet emerged from a pastoral state of society: it even approaches much nearer to the proportion of Norway, than to the

average of all the other states in Europe whose proportions can be ascertained.

Annual Average Deaths in the several Countries of Europe.

In Norway	1	in 48 of the whole population.	
In England	1	in 40 (according to some 1 in 43.)	
France	1	in 30	Average of these five, 1 in 31½.
Switzerland	1	in 33 or 34	
Holland	1	in 23	
Russia	1	in 34	
Sweden	1	in 37	

§ 51. The proof here adduced, that England, where the usual causes of premature deaths, where national riches, and luxury are more widely spread than elsewhere, has found out the means of combining nearly all the advantages of a complicated, and advanced state of society, with those of the most simple, and elementary; that its laws, and institutions have concentrated a greater general degree of political *bien être*, (if an expressive but untranslatable word may be allowed,) than has ever been known to exist in the world before; would give reason to suppose, that its system, improved, and refreshed by timely attention, and regulation,

foreseen, that employment enough would be found for every man, who could be set to work, without any miraculous interposition. And considering further, that nothing contributes so much to the developement of resources, and consequent demand for labour, as habits of industry among the labouring classes; they might possibly have conceived the law they proposed, calculated both to promote the end, and provide the means of national prosperity.

§ 3. If it be fair to judge of what passed in the mind of a lawgiver, by the effect his laws have on the regulation of society, in the ages following their enactments; this interpretation of the intentions of Elizabeth's ministers, may be justified by a reference to facts. For there has been no period since the reign of that queen, (except when the nation was involved in civil tumult,) in which work might not have been found for the poor, had the providing it been placed in proper hands; and in which the laws in question have not greatly contributed to so desirable a circumstance. These facts are conceived to be established in the second and third chapters of this Inquiry; where

the increase of our population, the causes of that increase, and the employments which have occupied it, are considered at some length.

§ 4. The fact however, as it has existed in former times, is rather a matter of history for our instruction, than of essential importance on the present occasion; which is, to investigate how far the laws still in existence, ordaining the employment of the poor, may in the actual circumstances of the country be profitably rescued from that oblivion, into which they have sunk; and if it be expedient to put them in practice, how that end may be best brought about.

§ 5. It would be puerile to waste any time in proving, that industry in itself is at all times, and in all places, preferable to idleness. But in inculcating the habit of it, we must ever be careful to provide; first, that it does not interfere with the acquisition of other good qualities; in which case we are not adding to the mass of virtues, but only substituting one for another: and secondly, that in supplying matter for the industry of the poor, we are not subtracting it from that of those already employed; in

which case, instead of adding to the mass of industry, we should be only changing the hands that practise it; and in a manner very unfair to individuals, and prejudicial to the state.

§ 6. The sort of work therefore, in which those residing in the country must be employed, is necessarily of a simple, or coarse nature; because as far as relates to women, and children, (the only able persons at present out of employ,) any complicated manufacture, requiring constant attendance, or any attendance at a distance from their residence, must be attended by the following bad effects: First; it would interfere, as far as children are concerned, with public instruction; for they cannot be at school and at a manufacture at the same time; and with their learning those domestic occupations, calculated, when they come out into life, to make them good servants; good heads of families; capable of being useful to their country; and of earning their livelihood, by other means than the mere manufacture they are employed in. Among the followers of the latter occupations in a workhouse, the domestic offices are all performed by a few,

set apart for those purposes. There is but one cook, a few sempstresses, and fewer washers for the whole community. Among the boys there is absolutely no occupation for a single one, except the manufacture; so that it may well be conceived what helpless beings, persons so educated must be, when left in the world to shift for themselves; and that under an appearance of acquiring habits of industry, they have been in fact incapacitated for all sorts of industry but one: a circumstance so strongly impressed upon the minds of the most intelligent managers of private charity schools, that care is taken, to confine the employment of the children in any occupation, that interferes with their acquisition of the more essential parts of knowledge, to a very few days in the week, or a very few hours in the day.

§ 7. There is another consideration, which militates against the employment of the poor in any manufacture, requiring constant attendance, which affects women as well as children; and this is, the interference it causes in the assistance required by the farmer in his fields, at busy seasons of the year; the most useful species of manual employment,

both to the state, and to the individuals, in which the peasanty can be employed: for which reason, as well as in justice to the farmer himself, his interest should be taken care of in this respect.

§ 8. It appears then from the contemplation of these necessary avocations, that the labour of paupers must be so curtailed in quantity, or interfered with by more important avocations, that none but simple occupations, and those that will bear interruption, can be practicably pursued by them: and that the necessary work to be found for their employment is but small, compared with what is generally supposed. For which reasons if persons were employed in their immediate management, who did not think they had an interest in their idleness; employment in this thriving country might not only have been found, but such also as would not have interfered with the manufactures of the rest of the people: which leads to the second precaution stated as necessary to be taken, viz. that the employment provided should not clash with the profits of the independent workman. This precaution applies equally to the poor in towns, where

manufactories requiring their more regular, and constant attendance, may under certain conditions perhaps be beneficial; since they do not interfere so much with the residence of the children in their parents' families, nor with those avocations which occur exclusively in the country.

§ 9. With respect to the interference of the labouring poor with the independent workman, more outcry appears to have been raised than the cause seems to justify. It has been said, that all general employment of the poor is extremely unfair to the independent workman, who was before engaged in operations of a similar nature; "that for every skein of worsted the poor spin, there must be a skein the less spun by some poor industrious family, who spun it before;" and moreover that though every man, in entering into business, must lay his account to meeting with fair competition; that this, in the case of the poor, is supported by a great bounty; through the assistance of which, notwithstanding inferior skill, and industry, the independent workman may be undersold, and unjustly excluded from the market. The latter part of this objection goes

in the first place to assert, that a manufacture carried on by a deputy, and that a deputy of the public, does not (even under the best regulations) contain many essential disadvantages, that will more than counterbalance very considerable opposite advantages: an assertion contrary to all experience. Next, it does not take into consideration the avocations of the children * in public instruction, and other necessary pursuits; the scanty production of forced labour; the quantity of work destroyed by their awkwardness in learning; and that as soon as they arrive at an age, when they may be supposed to have acquired dexterity, they leave the manufacture, and enter into pursuits of their own in marriage, or in service: that in truth, were employment for the poor generally established upon the principles just recommended, absolute profit could not be

* Any act of Parliament, which encouraged the general employment of the poor, would of course contain provisions to prevent its interfering with the education of children; their instruction in moral and domestic duties; and the necessary assistance to agriculture. As to any employment of able men on the public account, it must in the present state of England be too small to deserve notice, and be almost entirely confined to the correction of idleness in large towns.

the object in view, so much as the moral consequences arising from habits of industry. So that, considering the superior industry, and activity of the master workman, whose own eye is employed to forward his own profits; and the inferior nature of the instruments, with which the deputy of the public has to work; no doubt can exist, that a price as high as the fair profits of the former, will always be the market price of the article manufactured.

§ 10. But even supposing it true, that in some cases the independent workman might suffer, it would be far from forming a conclusive objection to all employment of the poor; unless it could be shewn, that the injury thereby done to the state, would be greater, than the good effects, arising from the introduction of general habits of industry, could counterbalance.

§ 11. With respect to the first part of the objection, it applies exclusively (like most of the other arguments attempted to be refuted in this Inquiry) to a stationary, or retrograde state of national prosperity; but is completely obviated by the increasing demand

for labour, constantly existing in England. If only a stated number of skeins of worsted could be sold, undoubtedly every one spun by the objects of the Poor Laws, would deprive an industrious family of just so much labour: but if the demand for worsted is increasing, what injury is done? None are thrown out of employ; those already engaged in the work are not injured; (except in as far as they meant to make an unfair profit by keeping the supply of yarn below the demand.) The utmost that can be said to be done is, that others are prevented from adopting the trade; but how they are injured by that, so long as other trades remain open to afford them employment, does not so clearly appear.

§ 12. The carding and spinning of wool by children in the workhouse of Shrewsbury, did not deprive other carders and spinners of employment; because if the supply of yarn had been equal to the demand, the fresh quantity produced could not have been sold but at such a price, as would have discouraged the workhouse from prosecuting the manufacture, and forced it upon other methods of employing its poor. It may perhaps have

diverted a certain portion of the capital, and labour of Shrewsbury, which would have entered into the carding line, to the iron-works or the looms of that city, and neighbourhood, to the furtherance of the general prosperity.

§ 13. The making of straw-plat, which has of late become so prevalent among the poor, has not even had this operation; it has only diverted a certain proportion of the capital, and labour of the kingdom of Italy, from that pursuit; which, with its soil, and climate, could certainly have been converted to a more profitable use, had its unfortunate situation left any spirit of industry among the inhabitants. If we consider that the demand for this article is so far from being supplied, that even one house in London * would now contract for any quantity that could be made for exportation †; if we inquire into the increasing demand for all our manufactures already in existence; that we still import sail-cloth from Russia; canvas and linen from Germany; cordage, iron,

* Messrs. Corston, Ludgate Hill.

† It is asserted that an order for straw-hats to the amount of £3000 has already arrived from Buenos Ayres.

tow, and yarn; we may form some idea of the extent, to which our home consumption, and the increased demands opening daily to our view from the colonies, would afford to the poor of the country a supply of raw, or coarse materials to work upon; without giving occasion, even to any pretence for an imputation of their interference with the more valuable manufactures.

§ 14. In short till we find, instead of an actual want of hands, a general complaint of want of work; founded to the conviction of an impartial, and well-informed mind, in the real existence of such a calamity; and not on the partial complaints of those, who use the excuse as a cloak for idleness; we may fairly refer the objection to employing the poor, arising from a fear that the industrious should be deprived of work, to the same class with those of the honest sailor, who, for fear of being carried out of his way, would by no means consent to be taken out of the sea on board of a vessel, bound on a different course, from that in which he suffered shipwreck.

§ 15. Upon the whole therefore, it does not appear, that, if the necessary avocations of the poor are properly secured to them, any danger would arise to the rest of the community; or fair objection on that account would exist, to the adoption of a general measure for their employment.

§ 16. To what cause then are we to ascribe the almost total neglect of the law, which enacts that the poor shall be set to work? Plainly to this: that the execution of it has been placed in hands, which, however proper they might have been at the first institution of the laws, are now of all others the most improper. The interests, the habits, the necessary avocations, and the ignorance of the overseers of the poor, are generally speaking such, as to militate directly, both against their wish, and their ability, to perform this part of their duty. If an overseer should be a man well acquainted, either by himself, or through communication with his superiors, in the commerce, and manufactures of his country; that he may know what is the best, cheapest, and most effectual method, to provide employment for the poor; how can you expect to find such

knowledge, and information, in a man of uncultivated mind, whose observation is confined to the narrow limits of his own parish, and the politics of its vestry? If he should be active, and diligent in constantly visiting those under his care, to see that they are well provided with materials, and do them justice by their labour; in purchasing the raw articles, and selling them to advantage when wrought up into manufactured goods; if he should be alert in taking care, that these occupations of the young do not interfere with their necessary instruction, and avocations, before pointed out: how can you expect all this sacrifice of time, and trouble, from a man who has the duty forced upon him, often against his will; who considers it as a necessary burthen, which he is determined to render as light as he can; upon whose exclusive attention the interests of his farm, his trade, and his own family absolutely depend? and who besides is glad enough to get rid of an office he never wished for, at the end of one year, before he could (if he were ever so well calculated for it, and exerted his utmost diligence) have made himself acquainted with its details; or with the true situation, and disposition of those

under his care; and consequently with the means of relieving them most to their own, and the public advantage? If he should be disinterested, and faithful in the discharge of his trust; anxious to see the poor employed, in a manner best suited to their own interests, and those of the public, without regard to eventual interference with his own particular trade, or pursuit: how can you expect to find such conduct, in a situation of life, where a man's importance, and respect among his fellows, depends on the profits he derives from, and the acuteness, and economy, with which he conducts his own business? who therefore will seldom set the poor to make, even for themselves, those articles which he sells the parish for their use; nor will indeed set them to work at all, while he thinks, (which through prejudice and ignorance, he is too apt to do,) that in proportion as he can keep them in habitual idleness, and want of employment, will be the cheapness and facility with which he can have their labour, on any extraordinary emergency; or at the more busy periods of his business. If it would be Utopian to expect all this, the cause is apparent, which has prevented any general attempts to employ the

poor in England, according to the provisions of the laws for their relief: and having discovered the cause, the remedy cannot long lie hid. But before we proceed to it, it is necessary to discuss another subject most intimately connected with the employment of the poor, viz. that of parish settlements.

§ 17. If the aged and infirm are to be supported; the young brought up, and instructed; and the sick relieved; it is clearly necessary that some particular party should be settled by law, to which each individual in want must look for these benefits; otherwise the trouble would be thrust from one to another, under pretence of superior liability, till at length by some subterfuge, it would be entirely evaded. A fairer distribution of the burthen cannot well be conceived, than that those who have reaped, or are likely to reap the benefit of the labour, should provide for the support of the individual. With respect to the aged, the law of settlements provides for them with tolerable accuracy according to this principle; as they are generally settled in the parish, where they have chiefly laboured; though this is not without considerable exceptions.

§ 18. But with respect to children it is often quite otherwise; as the expense of rearing them is sometimes borne by those, who never receive the slightest benefit from their future labour: this will be evident to all, who consider the great and constant demand, every town, and manufactory, makes upon the neighbouring villages for labourers, and servants; who are therefore reared by the latter, for the use, and enjoyment of the former *. So that if the bounds of settlements could be enlarged, in such a manner as to take in, not only a country parish, but an amalgamation of town, village, and manufactory, it would so far perhaps, be a more equitable partition. But in a manufacturing country, where the demand for labour is continually fluctuating from place to place, any attempt to confine a man's labour, (while he is able and willing to exercise it,) within the bounds of his settlement; or to control him in

* The demand upon the country for grown persons, to keep up the supply of labour in London, has been estimated at between twenty, and thirty thousand every year. Other large towns, particularly where manufactures flourish, occasion a proportionate migration. As these persons are exclusively reared for the benefit of the towns, it appears reasonable that they should bear some part of the expense, provided means could be found to charge them with it.

his disposition to carry his industry to any point within the kingdom, where he can employ it most profitably, is not only a crying injustice to the individual, but great impolicy to the state; for it goes to keeping him imprisoned, where through want of demand for labour, he very possibly cannot, by his utmost exertions, contribute his fair proportion to the support of his family: this must of course throw them on the country for relief. The late provision therefore, which enacted, that no man should be removed from his place of residence, till actually chargeable; in other words, that so long as he can find a market for his labour, he shall not be prevented by vexation, and oppression, from taking advantage of it; has been universally allowed to be founded in justice and good policy.

§ 19. But it is a very different question, how far it would be expedient to abolish every law of settlement; and set men at liberty, whether chargeable or not, whether their labour is wanted or not, to take up their residence wherever pleasure, or convenience dictates; since it would immediately charge those places, where the poor are most inclined to dwell, but where their own real

benefit, and that of the state is least interested that they should reside, with a very unfair proportion of the burthen of their support. Those places, for example, where commons are large, turf or peat plentiful; the edges of forests, where wood and mutton are easily stolen; every situation in short, where by a wandering independent life, an existence may be picked up without regular industry *, would soon be overstocked with idle inhabitants; and of course overcharged with poor; without even a pretence of necessity for so large a population to supply the demand for labour.

§ 20. It has been said, that the migration of the poor to these spots, where so many objects are to be had gratis, (as far of course as they can honestly be procured,) is a decided advantage to the community; whose interest it is, that every poor man should be supported at as small an expense as possible; as well as to the individual, who, by the articles he acquires from the common, is just so far bettered

* It has been suggested with great appearance of reason, that the same effect would take place in parishes, where the bounty of the more opulent inhabitants was most conspicuous.

in his condition, inasmuch as they must otherwise have been purchased. With respect to the state, the observation would be certainly just, if in addition to the time bestowed in paring and wandering over the common, the man contributed his fair proportion of labour to the public stock, by working regularly at the usual wages; for then the former would be clear gain to the public: the firing and other articles it procured would set free the same quantity for other uses, which the labourer must otherwise have bought: but as unfortunately the forester or turf-cutting peasant, dwelling on an extensive waste, seldom or never performs a day's work in the regular employments of industry, the real state of the argument is just the reverse.

§ 21. The interest of the community does not depend so much upon the food and necessaries men can acquire, without following some occupation; as upon their being under the necessity of working reasonably for the general benefit, to acquire such necessaries. With respect to the individuals themselves, nearly the same arguments will apply; a comparison between those, who depend upon the earnings of regular labour for their main-

tenance, and those, who, from depending on chance, of course acquire irregular and disorderly habits, will afford the most convincing arguments, to determine on which side is to be found the greatest comfort, and happiness.

§ 22. The abolition of settlements would likewise establish an unfair distribution of the aged and infirm; since it would be in the power of an old person to leave the place, which has received the advantage of his labour while in youth and health; and establish himself as a pensioner in another, where he had never done a stroke of work, by a mere conveyance of his person; which the party to be eased would be always ready to provide him with, and might perhaps by inhumanity oblige him to have recourse to.

§ 23. It appears then, upon the whole, that considerations of policy towards the state, justice towards particular bodies of the community, and well-understood humanity to individuals, equally forbid the total abolition of settlements; for which nevertheless a considerable outcry has been made, on the ground of the expediency of establishing a

free circulation of labour. No liberal person can hesitate in admitting, to its fullest extent, the advantage accruing to the state, from the free access of labour to any place, where the demand exists; and the benefit arising to the individual, from his liberty of carrying it thither: but he will likewise be convinced, that those ends are as fully attained as they can be without injury, by the law protecting every man from being interfered with on account of his settlement, until he becomes actually chargeable. A plea on this account for permission to every man to carry his labour where it is not wanted; or rather his laziness, or debility, where they are still less desired; resembles that of the ignorant or cowardly soldier for promotion, on the ground that his more brave or skilful comrade had received, and was enjoying it, as a consequence of his superior fitness or exertions.

§24. Let us now proceed to consider of such means, as reflection upon the causes before enumerated may suggest, for the attainment of that desirable object, the employment of the poor. And here the author must beg to be understood, that in pointing out such

alterations and provisions, as may be found in this Inquiry, to the attention of the public; his object is, rather to direct their notice to the nature of such improvements, as would obviate the present difficulties; than to press for the immediate, and exclusive adoption of his own particular plans. He is aware that objections may arise in the minds of those, better informed than himself, or than any private individual can be, in the relative bearings of the several great interests, forming the aggregate mass of the body politic: that a measure extremely well calculated to answer a beneficial purpose with respect to the poor, may have a contrary tendency on some other public interest. But he may be allowed to say, that, unless his ideas have been exaggerated by the peculiar bent of his attention, few interests are of more vital importance to the state than those into which he is now attempting an inquiry. He is aware likewise, that many concurrent circumstances must arise, before the due execution of any measures, that can be suggested, will be rendered practicable: and it is in the hope of giving birth to some of those circumstances, viz. a general conviction of the great importance of the question; of

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the policy of making some sacrifices, for the purpose of settling it on a solid foundation; and a general discussion of the principles upon which that foundation should be laid; that he has troubled the world with any suggestions.

§ 25. Upon the present occasion of finding means to employ the poor: it is satisfactory to know that the chief of the measures about to be recommended, as the outline of a plan for that purpose, received the sanction of a most comprehensive mind, ardently bent upon the consideration of the subject: that the great statesman who entertained it, was only prevented from bringing it forward for discussion, and adoption *, by more pressing objects of attention; and the violent state of parties, always ready to seize any pretence of reproaching a minister with the intention of increasing the patronage of the crown. If the business of the state is to be done, there must be officers appointed to perform it; though certainly their appoint-

* The whole of Mr. Pitt's plan for the amelioration of the Poor Laws was certainly not feasible; but had it been thoroughly discussed, it would in all probability have afforded the ground-work of a practicable plan of improvement.

ment should be so contrived, as to alter, as little as possible, the relative power of the different political orders in the state. The appointment of the officers about to be recommended can hardly, by any exaggeration, be strained into such alteration.

§ 26. To proceed then *: since it seems undeniable, that the present overseers are too much engaged in their own necessary avocations, to afford time; too much swayed by their own opposite interests to find inclination diligently, too ignorant, and too short a time in office, to be able effectually, to exert themselves in finding employment for the poor; the only method to secure the object would be, to put its execution into the hands of one, whose sole occupation it should be; who should be continued in office only "*quamdiù se bene gesserit;*" and whose

* The author thinks it fair to state, that few of the measures here recommended are original. He has chiefly endeavoured to bring under one point of view, from among those he has met with in conversation, or writing, such as appeared most feasible; least liable to objection; and most consonant with the principles he has laid down; and to adapt them to present circumstances, by such alterations and emendations as appeared necessary.

diligence and activity should be encouraged by rewards, and enforced by heavy penalties. But as the expense would be too great, and it would indeed be quite unnecessary to provide one of these officers for every parish, it is recommended that a certain number of parishes should be erected into a district; one or more of which should exist in every division of a county, possessing a bench of magistrates: but the districts should never be so large as not to admit of every house or cottage, where the poor are employed, or relieved, being visited by the officer (which he should be bound to do under a penalty) at least once in fourteen days *. Over each of these districts should be appointed an officer, and his clerk; each at low salaries out of the rates; the deficiencies in which salaries should be made up by the fees hereafter men-

* The cottages above alluded to, for the reception of industrious heads of families, might be erected in any part, or in several parts of this district, to serve for the whole of it. And as, in this free country, every man should enjoy as perfect liberty, as is consistent with the public good; perhaps it might be found in time, that no inconvenience would arise, from enlarging the bounds of a settlement to one of these districts; which might conduce in some measure to the desirable end of making the Quarter Sessions a

—"Rorum litibus orbum."

tioned. Ample security should be required at their appointment for any sums of money with which they may be entrusted; upon failure of which, the district should be re-assessed as in the case of other taxes.

§ 27. The overseers of each parish should be continued, and employed in making and collecting the rates, as at present; but should immediately pay over five sixths of the money to the district officers. A pauper in want of relief should apply as at present to his overseer; who, if he thinks him a proper object*, shall relieve him for one week, or till the district officer pays his next visit to the parish; and shall give him at the same time a printed ticket of recommendation to the officer: who at his next visit shall make personal inquiries into the situation of the pauper, his family, and circumstances; and shall take his measures accordingly for their relief, or employment, in the manner in which he may be directed. Partiality or imposition, in the district officer should be punished by very heavy

* Upon refusal of the overseer a magistrate would of course be referred to as at present.

penalties; and to prevent the possibility of their occurrence without discovery, a separate detailed account of the monies received, and expended in every parish, containing the names and situation of the paupers, and the amount and manner of their relief, should be made up by him every fortnight; to be called for by the overseer under a penalty; submitted to the vestry for their observations; and kept for the free inspection of any one paying to the rates for the following fortnight: after which it should be filed and safely deposited in the parish; with a general liberty of inspecting the file for a moderate fee, to go in aid of the rates. Thus would the expenditure of the money be exposed to the rigorous scrutiny of those, upon whom it was raised; and who could have no possible interest, but that of keeping down its amount; since the patronage flowing from the distribution would be no longer theirs; their perfect knowledge of the parish, would soon discover any unnecessary expense: and this further advantage would arise from the plan, that an authentic and intelligible history of the Poor Laws in each parish would exist among its archives, an advantage by no

means flowing at present from the overseers' books *.

§ 28. The district officers might be very useful, and would gradually lessen the necessity of public employment for the poor, by being the depositaries of the wants of their own, and the neighbouring districts for labour; so that any one, really in want of work, might immediately be directed to the market, where it was to be had: for which purpose the officers might be permitted to receive a small fee, in aid of their salaries, from a labourer or servant wanting employ; and a larger from a master wanting hands; for the mutual benefit he might confer on both. As he would be continually moving about his district, his opportunities in this way would be great: his residence might be an office for setting down names; and partiality might be prevented by penalties. Thus would the labour out of employ, in each district, be reduced absolutely to that,

* Parishes should be permitted, where they choose, to have a permanent overseer at their own expense, instead of being subject to the inspection of the district officer; provided the overseer be bound by law to make the returns hereinafter specified to the district officer.

for which there is no demand. And if the system of communication could be made to embrace the whole country, by the establishment of some general organ of information; the same effect would be produced throughout the nation at large; which, in a state of society like ours, where the general demand for labour appears to exceed the supply, could not but be followed by the happiest consequences.

§ 29. This perhaps might be brought about, by the establishment of a general board; which would be found useful for many other purposes. For as it cannot be supposed, that district officers can be found, much better acquainted with the general commercial interests of their country, or with the relative demands of its various parts for labour, than the present overseers; a regular correspondence should be established between the officers, and a general board of commissioners in London; consisting of the most enlightened, and independent gentlemen of large fortune, well acquainted with the commercial, and agricultural interests of their country; serving without salary; but bound to the strict discharge of their office

under penalties; and by an oath not to convert it to any private or political purpose whatever. This board should be sufficiently numerous to allow of the attendance of a certain proportion of it in rotation: it might consult together upon the relative local situation of each district, and the demands existing within reach of its powers of conveyance; and might communicate orders in consequence to the district officers, through the magistrates of the division, previously submitting them for their consideration, and observations *.

* It would be desirable perhaps, that this superior board should consist of forty-eight members, two to sit each fortnight in rotation; with liberty to all others to attend; and monthly general meetings of the whole. That such a number of proper men may be found, willing to undertake the gratuitous office, no man at all conversant with the exalted characters in almost every profession, who at present interest themselves in the concerns of the poor, can doubt: he could probably name in a few minutes more than that number, whose characters would give a certain pledge of the integrity, and assiduity, with which they would discharge their trust. The consideration in which persons are always held in this country, who interest themselves in doing good to their fellow-creatures, and particularly to the poor, would soon render the situation a desirable one, to that description of men, of whom the board should exclusively consist. Those who look for more brilliant honours, or

§ 30. By these means a great facility would be given to the free circulation of labour; and a proportionate diminution take place of those depending upon the poor establishment. With respect to such as would still remain so, and children; general instructions should be given, for providing them with employment at their own homes, as much as possible; entirely so indeed, with the exception of towns, and the workhouses already existing, which should be gradually diminished, as they can be let, or converted to other purposes; because the vice, and caballing are usually greater in those houses, than can arise from employment at home; because the laws for maintaining order and discipline in them are at present very defective*; and because employment at home does not interfere with the necessary avocations before mentioned. With respect to the simple

emoluments as the reward of their services, may certainly render *good service* to their country; but it should be in some other pursuit.

* It would tend much to remedy this inconvenience in such poor-houses as might remain; if the power given to incorporated parishes, for the regulation of their workhouses, were extended to every poor-house without exception.

materials, on which they should be employed, the board of commissioners, from their general knowledge of the wants of the country, would communicate those wants to the magistrates of such divisions, as they should think most capable of supplying them; who should thereupon issue such orders, as may seem desirable, to the district officer, or write their reasons for declining it to the board. Expensive experiments, machinery, &c. should be cautiously avoided, since habits of industry, rather than an attempt at profit, should be the object in view.

§ 31. Besides their duties relating to the relief and employment of the poor, the district officers should be bound, under heavy penalties, to make monthly returns to the general board, of the number of poor under their care; their employment; the state of the schools in the district; an account of the several sums expended under each head; together with any other information within their cognizance, that may be required. The board of commissioners should compress these details into an annual report, to be presented to Parliament on a fixed day in every session, accompanied with an account

of their own proceedings: which would serve, not only to keep up the attention of the Legislature and the country to this important subject; but likewise to afford certain and undeniable data, upon which to found future proceedings, and a more perfect system. This part of the plan would moreover enable the public to form a decided judgment, between the various and opposite opinions, to which speculations upon uncertain data have given birth; and in many directly opposite instances, have bestowed equal plausibility. This benefit alone would more than counterbalance the expense of the officers, supposing it should ultimately be found to make an addition to the rates; which, if the plans before suggested for improving the mode of granting relief were adopted, there is no reason to suppose would be the case.

§ 32. At the same time the poor would be receiving that degree of employment necessary to make them useful members of society; which, in all probability, was the extent of the original intention of those, who first enacted that they should be employed at all: and the superintendence of parliament, the board of commissioners, and

the magistrates, would at all times keep the system within its proper bounds; and be ready to counteract any unforeseen evils that might be found to occur. The district officers would have every incitement to the active and faithful discharge of their duty, which personal interest and vigilant inspection can create; and every discouragement from the abuse and perversion of it, that heavy punishment, and the certainty of discovery can bestow. The overseers would be relieved from the most troublesome and perplexing part of their present duty, while that still remaining to them would be suited to their capacity, and could not be so properly executed by others. The poor would be better relieved, and what is still more desirable, would often find public relief unnecessary, by being put into the way of gaining their own livelihood: and the state would reap infinite advantage from the facility given to the free circulation of labour.

§ 33. The only difficulty that seems to have any weight would be the *appointment* of the district officers. Their qualities, however, need not be very shining; activity, good sense, and docility, joined to a know-

ledge of writing and accounts, would be the principal requisites; so that there is scarcely any tract of country, as large as the proposed districts, which would not afford many persons of sufficient endowments. Whether it might be most expedient to select each officer from the inhabitants of the district, for which he is to act, may admit of a doubt: perhaps the temptation to partiality, arising from the residence of friends and relations in the district, may be supposed more than to counterbalance his superior local knowledge, which a stranger might soon arrive at.

§ 34. With respect to the authority by which they should be appointed, there are good reasons why it should not be removed at farthest to a greater distance, than the bounds of the county, within which they are to act; and to obviate all cause of reproach, it should be neither directly, nor indirectly in the hands of Government. But in whatever manner they may be appointed, they should decidedly be removable by the magistrates of the division, upon cause assigned; with a liberty to the person removed of appealing, upon the usual terms of paying treble costs, should the appeal not

be allowed to be just: and they should be *ipso facto* dismissed, upon proof established of peculation; disobedience of orders; neglect of making returns; or any species of misconduct, that may appear to the Legislature, of a nature to interfere with the essential duties of their office; or to endanger the advantages, which the public has a right to expect from their establishment.

§ 35. The expense of the district officers would be about 143,000*l.* a year, supposing every district to consist of seven parishes on an average, (fewer and more in each according to the population;) and the salary of the officer, for himself and a clerk, to be 100*l.* *per annum*, besides the fees before mentioned *. The clerks of the superior board, and other incidental expenses relating to it, and the district officers, might raise the whole expense of the new system to 200,000*l.* *per annum*; which, if it were paid by the public for five years, by way of experiment how far good might arise, would produce more than the money's worth, in

* The number of district officers would of course be about 1430.

the information obtained on the most interesting and important subject of political economy. The letters received by the superior board, chiefly containing returns, which would only require to be entered by the clerks, in books kept for the purpose, might amount to about two thousand in a month; those they would have occasion to write, might be from fifty to an hundred in a week; besides such printed circular letters, as might be necessary at the first establishment of the system.

§ 36. If the whole of the plan here detailed for consideration should at first sight appear rather complicated; let the extended nature, and importance of the subject be considered; compared with which, it is presumed the means will appear much less complex than could reasonably be expected. The total absence of intermediate agents between the district officers and the superior board, (except in the case of reference to magistrates on the subject of employing the poor in their divisions,) would give both simplicity and energy to their proceedings. Considerable and severe attention would no doubt be

necessary at the first outset; but when once the routine was established, there is every reason to suppose, that the conduct of the business would be to the full as plain and unembarrassed, as that of any office in the country: and should the sytem be found to produce the good effects to be expected from it, it could not but operate in producing a considerable reduction in the rates.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE INCREASE OF THE SUMS COLLECTED FOR THE RELIEF OF THE POOR; AND THE CAUSES WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO RAISE THEM TO THEIR ACTUAL AMOUNT.

§ 1. THE capital, the funded debt, and consequent circulating medium of exchange, have of late years increased so fast in England; that the difference between the real and nominal value of every article, has borne a proportion out of all comparison, with any that has occurred in the former periods of our history. It would be an insult to the understanding of the reader, to enter into a full explanation on this subject; since it could only consist of a repetition of what every man of liberal education has made himself acquainted with, in the accurate writings of Dr. Adam Smith; and the many excellent authors, who since his work appeared, have adapted his principles and reasoning to the altered circumstances of the times in which they wrote.

§ 2. But in calculations arising from facts, within our own recollection, an effect which we have been accustomed to consider as matter of history, produced only by a long course of years, is very apt to escape the attention, and not to be taken into the account, in the discussion of a much shorter period. Therefore the rapid diminution in the value of money within the last twenty years, (however ridiculous the notice of such a circumstance in so short a period might be considered in former times,) renders it neither useless, nor impertinent, to recall to our recollection; that any augmentation of the sum collected for the relief of the poor, must only be taken for actual increase of expense, so far as it will go to purchase an additional quantity of necessaries, and not further. For if thirteen shillings and four-pence, in the year 1783, would have procured the same necessary articles of life, that twenty shillings did in 1803; the real increase of the rates, in the course of those twenty years, would only be equal to the overplus remaining, after deducting from the amount in the latter year, the sum which the same quantity of necessary articles, as were consumed by the poor in 1783, would have cost in 1803,

according to the actual state of the depreciation of money.

§ 8. That the price of the necessaries of life has really increased in the proportion stated, during the above-mentioned period, is rather below than above the fact; the necessity of proving which is precluded by general notoriety, and the ease with which conviction may be had, by a reference to any family account book: or it may be ascertained by the average prices of corn, and other necessaries detailed in the various periodical publications. The increase therefore, which we find took place in the amount of the rates in the same period, from 2,130,000*l.* to 4,200,000*l.* can only be estimated as a real augmentation of expense, on account of the poor, of 1,005,000*l.*, and not of 2,070,000*l.*, as it would appear by the nominal amount of the different sums actually raised at each period. The fairness and justice of which reasoning appears from this; that the price of the necessaries of life being augmented one half of the original price, the same number of persons, that were supported in 1783 for 2,130,000*l.*, would

have required a sum one half more *, or 3,195,000*l.* for food, clothes, and lodging, in 1803; supposing their wants and habits in these particulars to have remained the same: which sum, being deducted from 4,200,000*l.* the amount of the charge in 1803, leaves a remainder of 1,005,000*l.* as before advanced: which is all that can be fairly stated as the clear increase of real expense, to be accounted for by other means than the diminution in the value of money.

§ 4. If no falsehood, or inaccuracy, can be found in this calculation, and the reasoning built upon it, we may form some idea of the accuracy, and justice of those conclusions, with respect to the enormous abuses of the Poor Laws, which are drawn from calculations on the great disproportion between the increase of the sum raised, and that of the population: and of the mistaken

* An apology should perhaps be made for guarding against quibbles, by stating such evident truths as the following: That a half added is equal to a third of the whole amount, and a third deducted, of course equal to one half of the remainder; a third added is equal to one fourth of the whole amount, and a fourth deducted of course equal to a third of the remainder.

notions of those, who are filled with indignation at being informed, that two millions of money were found sufficient to satisfy the same wants in a population of eight millions, which are pretended to be barely provided for, by four millions of money, in a population of nine millions. Such a fact, if the value of money had continued the same at both periods, would no doubt give reason to apprehend great abuses; but, even to give it a plausible appearance of fair argument, the statement should be corrected by deducting one million from the latter sum; because (as we have seen) had the population, and the method of providing for the poor, as well as their number, continued precisely the same as in 1783, the diminution in the value of money would have created that additional expense; which ought therefore certainly to be deducted from the sum brought forward as a proof of the actual increase of poor, or of the articles provided for them.

§ 5. But it is clear, that in order to form a perfectly fair judgment of the increase, or decrease between two periods, in the consumption of any article, of which the money paid for it is to be the criterion; the

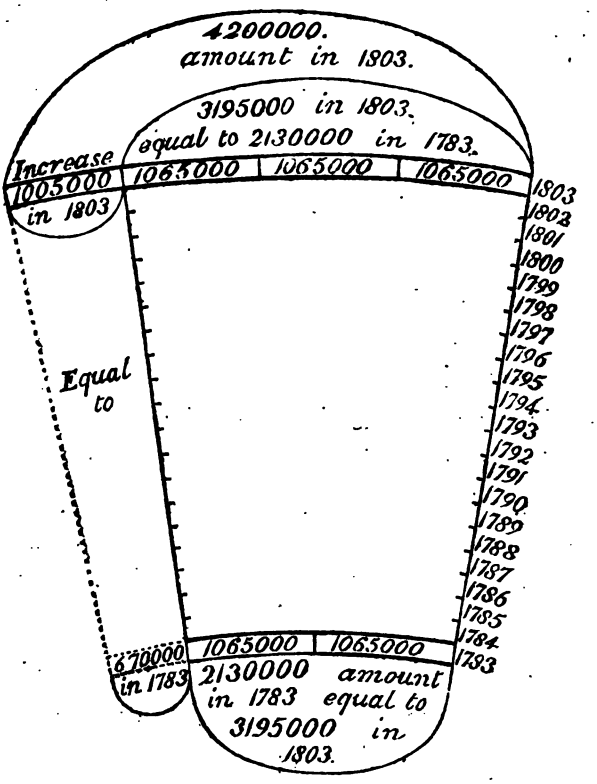
whole of the sums, paid for the article at each time, must be reduced to the same standard of real value. To explain this by a familiar example: Suppose twenty quarters of oats cost me as many pounds in 1783; at 20*s.* a quarter, when I kept two horses; and that upon enlarging my stable to four horses in 1803, when oats were at 30*s.* I should find my forty quarters of oats amount to 60*l.*: what opinion should I entertain of a man's wisdom, or information, who should insist upon it, that because I paid thrice the sum which the oats cost in 1783, I therefore certainly either kept six horses, or my groom cheated me of twenty quarters of oats? Or if, upon my explaining to him, that the oats bought in 1783 for 20*l.* now cost me 30*l.* he should still insist, that with the remaining 30*l.* I must either keep three horses, or be cheated of ten quarters of oats? There would at least be ground for asserting that he was mistaken: since, in order to know, by the sums of money spent, how many more oats were consumed in my stable in 1803 at a cost of 60*l.* than in 1783 at that of 20*l.*; and consequently how many more horses were kept there at the same rate of feeding; he should have inquired the price

of oats at the two periods; and if he found they had increased one half of their original price, should have deducted a third from the sum of 60*l.*, if he meant to form his calculation on the price of oats in the former period. He should therefore estimate the increased consumption of oats and number of horses only at the rate of 40*l.* (of the value of 1783) and not at that of 60*l.*; because he must know, that when oats are one half dearer, the latter sum will only purchase the same quantity.

§ 6. So, when the increase of poor, and the articles provided for them, between 1783 and 1803, is to be computed by that of the money raised for their support at the two periods, the whole sum raised in the latter year, must be reduced to the standard of the real value of money in the former; which being one half greater, the reduction must of course be one third. For if the price of the necessaries of life had continued in 1803, as they were in 1783, instead of being augmented a half, the same number of persons that were supported in the latter year for 4,200,000*l.* could have received equal assistance for one third less; that is, for

2,800,000*l.*; from which being deducted 2,130,000*l.* the charge in the earlier year, the remainder is 670,000*l.* This in fact would have been the whole addition to the rates, had the value of money continued the same. So that comparing the two periods, the number of poor, and the real value of the articles provided for them, have only increased in the proportion of one to three on the original sum in 1783; and have not either doubled, or increased one half, as the abovementioned assertions would appear to insinuate. The same arguments will apply, more or less, to every increase of the poor's rates, that has taken place since their first institution.

The following Diagram was presented to the author, as illustrative of his reasoning, by an ingenious friend:



It is offered to the reader as a satisfactory method of reducing the truth of proportional arguments to ocular demonstration.

§ 7. It should be thoroughly understood, that the argument used in this chapter is by no means intended to prove, that many in-

dividuals do not pay to the rates a much higher proportion in the pound sterling, than they did twenty years ago; or than the augmentation above stated would seem to warrant: that inconvenience arises from the unequal distribution of the burthen, and will be noticed presently. The intention is merely to shew, that the number of persons receiving relief, and the real value of the money spent upon them in 1803, bore a proportion to those in 1783, equal to the difference between 2,130,000*l.* and 2,800,000*l.* only, (or less than one third;) and not between 2,130,000*l.* and 4,200,000*l.* or nearly double, as hath been very incorrectly asserted.

§ 8. In accounting, however, for the actual increase which has taken place, it will tend much to the clearness of the deduction about to be entered into, to disencumber ourselves entirely from all reference to the difference in the value of money in the two periods; and take the sum remaining to be accounted for according to its value in the year 1803.

§ 9. The amount of this sum, as we have already seen, is 1,005,000*l.* Those who have

entered into the detail of the increased demand for men, which has been laid before them in the former parts of this Inquiry, will be at no loss to comprehend the nature of most of the causes which have produced the charge. The shipping, manufactures, fisheries, and other works of men's hands, have all much more than doubled during the period under consideration. The number of houses built—one may almost say of towns created, for the reception of labourers, has wonderfully increased; consequently the heads of families, upon whom (as we have seen) the operation of the Poor Laws is very extensive, have multiplied in the same proportion. But as the wages of labour (happily for the growing commerce of the country) have not increased equally; these heads of families have not been able to bring up their children, when numerous; and still less to lay by a sum for their own support, when disabled through age, or accident, without assistance from the rates; which may therefore be supposed to have increased in some proportion to the number of additional families established in the new habitations.

§ 10. It does not occur, in what manner the number of these families can be very accurately ascertained: unfortunately we have no authentic account of the population existing in England, except at one period, (in 1801;) nor any that can be depended upon, of the proportion, which the number of persons in the various occupations of life bear to each other*. It does not appear therefore, that any better means can be adopted, than the comparison of the various productions of labour in agriculture, manufactures, and other employments in the two periods: by which, though we cannot attain to the knowledge of the absolute increase in the number of persons employed; we may, by making reasonable allowances, form a tolerably competent idea of its relative proportion.

§ 11. The state of the exports seems to be a fair criterion of the increased quantity of persons employed in commerce and ma-

* The information pretended to be given on this subject, in the abstract of the answers, and returns, relative to the population, laid before Parliament in 1801, is acknowledged to be so incorrect, that no reliance can be placed upon it.

nufactures, (labour shortened by improvements in machinery deducted;) since all increase in exportation must be the consequence of a proportionate augmentation in the general industry of the country.

§ 12. The average value of the cargoes exported in the five years from 1780 to 1785 was fourteen millions; that of those exported in the five years preceding 1805 was above twenty-four millions; (official value in both cases *:) here then is an increase of ten millions upon fourteen, or five sevenths, in the exports, in the course of twenty years: setting off two sevenths for labour shortened by improvements in machinery † within that period, there will remain a clear augmentation of three sevenths, or between a

* The real value of British manufactures alone exported in 1803, was above forty millions, and those in 1805 have been stated to amount to fifty-three millions.

† The improvements in machinery in the last twenty years have *possibly* shortened the labour employed in the actual operations, for which they are a substitute, more than two sevenths; but if we consider the new sources of labour they have occasioned, in canals, carriages, &c. &c. a deduction of two sevenths for labour *upon the whole* shortened by machinery; perhaps the allowance will appear even liberal.

proportion to those in 1697, than they did in 1803, by one third, as we have seen: the real value of the exports must have borne the same proportion; and according to the system upon which we are now calculating, the manufactures, and the rates must have done the same. An addition therefore must be made, on this account to the expected amount of the rates, of 225,000*l.*; that sum being equal to 25 *per cent.* (or one third of 75 *per cent.*) upon 900,000*l.*, the increase already accounted for; which two sums added together make a total of 1,125,000*l.**; and bring the augmentation in the rates, fairly to be expected according to this mode of reasoning, to 125,000*l.* more than that, which has actually taken place.

§ 14. The inland trade, and manufactures for home consumption, have clearly borne as high a proportion to exports of late years,

* It must be understood that this sum is not given, as that *actually brought upon the rates* by the increased manufacturing and trading population; but as *the proportion of increase* reasonably to be *expected* in the rates, as they are affected by the whole augmented population of the country, taking the exports as *the standard by which to estimate it.*

half and a third in the labour employed in commerce and manufactures; as far as the exports can be considered as a criterion. Taking them therefore as the standard, by which to estimate the rise, fairly to be expected in the rates, from the labour employed; it would amount to 900,000*l.* that being three sevenths of 2,130,000*l.* the sum raised under the rates, when the exports amounted only to fourteen millions: this expected increase, however, falls short of the actual augmentation of the rates by about 100,000*l.*

§ 13. But as the official value of the exports was settled in the year 1697, and the value of all merchandise exported has been ever since entered in the books of the Custom-house, according to the rates then established; the official value of almost every article of commerce falls very much short of its real value; in consequence of the great enhancement in the price of all things since that year. In the year 1800, the real value was supposed to exceed the official value about *75 per cent.* But the value of money, and consequently the price of the articles of commerce in 1783, must have borne a nearer

as they did twenty years ago. This appears from the great increase of riches and luxury: it would be needless to enumerate the various and expensive articles of convenience, elegance, and magnificence, which have been comparatively introduced into ordinary use, within our own memory: the persons employed in manufacturing, or procuring them, must of course have increased in proportion; and (as far as observation can warrant an assertion, the accuracy of which it would not be easy to ascertain) in a proportion as great as three sevenths.

§ 15. Thus we see that as far as the labour employed in trade and manufactures may be allowed to be the standard, by which to estimate the augmentation to be expected in the poor's rates; it has been considerably less than would have been fairly conjectured, by any person forming a just calculation upon the data allowed.—But as trade, and manufactures, with all the employments subservient to them, do not perhaps occupy more than one third of the working population; in order to establish the general application of this reasoning, we must inquire how far the augmentation of labour in the

other sources of industry has kept pace with that in trade and manufactures.

§ 16. And first of agriculture; which may employ about a fifth of the population; since the labour of one man in that occupation has been asserted, on fair grounds, to be capable, according to the usual cultivation of England, to maintain himself and four others.

From 1783 to 1803, about twelve hundred acts of parliament were passed for the enclosure and improvement of waste lands; besides large sums laid out in the improvement of those already in cultivation. The number of cultivators, therefore, must certainly have increased in some degree; though from the superior profits of trade, and the unequal burthens upon land, by no means in an equal proportion with the former. We cannot estimate the number of persons employed on the land in 1803, at any thing near three sevenths more than were so engaged in 1783; as we have seen to have been the case with the manufacturers.

§ 17. The increase then to be expected in the rates, according to an estimate, formed by calculations on the improvements of the

soil, would perhaps fall short of the sum to which we find they have actually risen.

§ 18. The produce of the foreign fisheries, as well as those on our own shores, has trebled in the period alluded to; and, including the curing, and transportation of the fish, employ a great number of persons; whose amount, instead of one third, has probably increased three times. But these fisheries, in many instances, are carried on by the natives of countries, to which the Poor Laws do not extend.

§ 19. The number of domestic servants, (a fertile source of paupers) arising from the addition of so many rich merchants, manufacturers, colonists, and landed proprietors, to the class constituting men of fortune, have much increased within the last twenty years. The army and navy are augmented in a still higher proportion; though many of these likewise are natives of countries not possessing the establishment of the Poor Laws.

§ 20. Upon the whole then, we cannot estimate the increase of people in these occupations, as far as they operate upon the

poor's rates, nearly so high as in the case of commerce and manufactures; and must therefore seek elsewhere for causes to account for the deficiency.

§ 21. But let us first inquire, by a reference to the actual increase of population, as far as it can be discovered, to what extent it agrees with the proportions stated above, as those in which additions have been made to the several occupations. The population of England and Wales in 1781, has been estimated, with all the accuracy the nature of the case will admit of, to have been rather more than eight millions; and the returns of 1801 state a total amount of 9,340,000; an increase of 1,300,000 in those twenty years. Now, if we suppose the number of persons in 1781, not contributing productive labour, to have been with their families 1,500,000; and one third of the remaining 6,500,000 to have consisted of persons engaged in commerce, manufactures, and the employments subservient to them, with their families, (*i. e.* 2,160,000;) we shall, by adding three sevenths to this last number, according to the amount of the additional work performed by that description

of labourers, as above stated, find an addition to the population of 900,000 on those accounts; which would only leave a surplus of 400,000, for the increase of persons in all the other occupations, to make up the whole amount of 1,300,000. Since, however, so many of those engaged in these other occupations, are not subjects upon whom the Poor Laws operate; and the improved state of husbandry has enabled so many more acres to be cultivated by the same number of hands; it is probable that this estimate may be not far from the truth.

§ 22. To return then to the causes, which may serve to account for such part of the augmentation in the poor's rates, as have not yet been explained. Not to notice the petty partiality of overseers, which would be got rid of by confining their office to the collection of the rates; nor the additional number of alehouses, and other evidently inadequate causes, which have been assigned for the augmentation in the rates; we will proceed at once to the two principal causes remaining to be considered.

§ 23. The first of these is, the effect produced by the late scarcities in diminishing that laudable feeling of independence, which prevented many from applying for relief, on the first pressure of necessity; which prompted them to struggle against many difficulties, in order to gratify the honest pride they took, in never having received parish relief; but which, being once obliged to apply for, in times of pressing necessity, they no longer scruple to recur to, on the first emergency. This is an evil which may increase, and become dangerous; but being likewise closely connected with the supply of food in England, a subject most interesting to the poor, which will be treated at length in the following chapter; it is needless to enlarge upon it here. We will therefore pass on to the second cause referred to, which is, the increased wants of the labourer arising from the alteration in the state of society.

§ 24. The number of articles introduced into common use by the increase of riches, and commerce, are spread by degrees so extensively over the whole face of the country; that they are at length, naturally enough, considered as necessaries of life, even among

the lowest of the people. This of course makes their wants bear a larger proportion to their income than formerly: how far the possession of these articles really adds to the comfort and happiness of the individual, may perhaps be doubted: probably when once they come to be considered as necessaries, which by familiar use is soon the case, they afford no greater gratification than the coarser and more homely accommodations of which they are become the substitutes. What ceases to be an indulgence, no longer gives pleasure: the courtier feels no greater satisfaction in his silk coat, which he looks upon as a necessary, than the ploughboy does in his smock frock.

§ 25. But whatever may be the effects of this spreading of luxury on the mind of the individual labourer, the state (in a free country) is certainly benefited: for though the daily enjoyments of life, while quietly possessed, do not, from their familiarity, impart a very lively gratification; yet they are the last things a man can resolve to part with; because the loss of them alters every habit, and consequently destroys all the comfort of his existence. If any one then should be

inclined to disapprove of what may appear to him to be the increased enjoyments of the poor; let him reflect, that by giving them an interest in the improved state of society, those enjoyments are at once the consequence, and the cause of the freedom, and prosperity we enjoy.

§ 26. In despotic countries, "where the bounties of Nature designed for all, are monopolized by a few, and the many are suffered to starve, tantalized by surrounding plenty;" the upper ranks live in the indulgence of every luxury, while the labourer and the peasant are debased to the lowest pitch of misery; their very subsistence depending upon the caprice of their tyrants. The poor have there no interest in any improvements, or acquisitions made by the rich; there is no gradation, by which the beneficial influence of such advantages can descend to them; and the consequence must evidently be, an exacerbation of spirit against their superiors, that requires only free scope for its operation, to end in their complete destruction; in anarchy, ruin, and confusion: as we have had but too dreadful opportunities of knowing, from the experience of the

effects produced by such causes in a neighbouring country.

§ 27. But in our happy land, scarcely an acquisition is made by the rich, which does not operate in some degree on all. There is a regular gradation of enjoyment; and the lowest in the scale of rank feels his consequence, and importance to his superiors so strongly, that he assumes to himself a right of participating in the improved state of their existence*; he consequently feels an interest in that improvement, and in the continuance of the state of things, which promotes it: he will fight or die for the constitution of his country, because it affords him advantages that would be lost by its annihilation. Thus the motive of self-interest, the only one which can be supposed to influence the great mass of a people, has

* It has been observed, that an English cottager sits down every day to a meal, the component parts of which are brought from the opposite extremities of the globe. If tea be not more pernicious to the human constitution, than most other beverages, which (prejudice apart) is probably the case; long may the cottager have that inducement to feel an interest in the prosperity of some of our most important colonies and commercial speculations!

here the same operation in vulgar minds, which the ardour of patriotism produces in those of a more exalted cast *. The "*dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori*" may do very well to fire the soul of the officer or statesman; but some more substantial inducement is necessary to excite the energies of an unenlightened individual; and to give those means, and resources, by which the foundation of national security may be laid, and its superstructure kept in repair.

* This truth is well exemplified in an anecdote, which was related in presence of the author, by a foreigner of distinction, who had resided many years in England; being much struck with the honest bluntness, and patriotic feeling of the lower orders of the people, he was in the habit of listening in the streets to the conversations that passed among them.

He one day overheard the following dialogue between two beggars at the corner of a street:

A. Well, comrade! so, Nelson's killed at last, poor fellow!

B. Yes, Tom; I'm sorry for him; but you know he DIED WITH HONOUR, fighting for us all.

A. Very true, Dick, so he did; and how would a man wish to die better?

His observation upon this little dialogue was very just: that there was not a country in the world where the *amor patriæ*, and the pride arising from the fancied participation of self in the glorious actions of one's countrymen, would have descended so low in the scale of society.

§ 28. That these are not speculative reasonings, calculated to mislead the judgment by rousing the feelings, and captivating the fancy; but the effects of sober observation on the habits and disposition of the English labourer, may be proved by the test of experience. Nor need we recur to any distant period of our history for the proof. The universal alacrity with which all ranks of people took up arms at the commencement of the present war, on the first hint that the safety of the country, and its constitutional liberties were in danger, excited the admiration of foreigners to a degree of enthusiasm, proportioned to the improbability of such effects being produced by the same causes, in their own country. It is consistent with the author's knowledge, that many of the subjects of the most despotic governments in Europe, who were travelling through England for information and amusement at that period, were more struck with this effect of freedom on the disposition of the people, than with that produced by it, on their industry and ingenuity. There is every reason to suppose that the account given by them (on their return to the Continent) of the state of the public mind, and

the exertions consequent upon it in this country, contributed much to keep alive the few sparks of independence, which still glimmered in Europe amidst the ashes of liberty.

§ 29. With respect to ourselves, this at least is certain, that if the voluntary service then entered into by the people saved the country; that salvation is solely to be attributed to the universal diffusion of the blessings, flowing from the constitution, among all ranks of society; of which the participation of the poor in all the acquisitions of the rich is one of the chief effects. Though this circumstance, therefore, may have somewhat increased the amount of the poor's rates, who shall say the country has not had its money's worth? and it is no small recommendation to the laws, under which they are collected, that without their assistance this effect could not be produced, except by means essentially interfering with the general prosperity of the country.

§ 30. We have now gone through a cursory detail of the increase of the poor's rates, and of the causes which have produced it:

we have endeavoured, as accurately and fairly as our abilities enabled us, to separate the augmentation of the articles, really provided to the poor at the public expense, from that increase which is only apparent and artificial; and have accounted for it in a manner, that appears consistent with experience of the fact. It is hoped the discussion will be satisfactory, in convincing the reader of the fallacy and insufficiency of those reasons, which have been deduced from the abuses of magistrates and overseers; the increase of vice; the consequent deterioration in the morals, manners, and industry of the people; and the thousand other causes which have been magnified in their effects, or mistaken in their operations, by persons, who, instead of taking an enlarged view of the subject as affected by the commerce, and population of the country, have confined their observation within the limits of their own parish, or district: who therefore have never thought it possible, that an effect shewing itself in so small a compass, can be produced by causes of so general and extensive a nature, embracing the most complicated political interests. Nor will the arguments of others appear more satisfactory, who have formed

their opinions by reasoning upon principles of abstracted theory, without any observation at all as to their actual operation.

§ 31. Each of these parties has had its schemes of redress; and their various reasonings upon them, have introduced such confusion into the question, that many well-meaning persons have at length been inclined to agree in the measure recommended by one of them, viz. a total abolition of the laws; persuaded of the difficulty of finding other remedies, and therefore willing to believe them unnecessary. Whereas, if there be any truth in the foregoing observations, nothing can be more clear, than that the inconveniences complained of have been much exaggerated; that such of them as really do exist, and operate as evils, are not the causes of the increase of the poor's rates, but the natural effects of the state of society, and growing general prosperity, which really are the causes of that increase: and that having arisen from circumstances never occurring before in the same degree, and not hitherto foreseen, they are the proper subjects for new laws, made to counteract their inconveniences. It is devoutly to be wished,

that the strict execution of all such laws, as shall be enacted for so laudable a purpose, may render them effectual in attaining their object: but to expect that they will diminish *the amount* of the poor's rates, while the demand for labour, and consequent increase of people, continues as it has done for many years past, would be about as reasonable as to expect a dam thrown across the mouth of the Medway, to stop the tide from flowing into the Thames.

§ 32. In addition to the sum of 4,200,000*l.* applied to the relief of the poor in 1803, a further sum of 980,000*l.* was collected by rates, and applied to other purposes; such as the church rate for repairs and ornaments in the church, and its appendages; the county rate for the payment of constables; expenses in supporting militia-men's wives and families; repairing and constructing jails, and the salaries of those employed therein; repairing county bridges, and the roads thereto adjoining; coroner's fees; and about a dozen other purposes of minor importance. With respect to the sums collected for these purposes, no objection seems to attach to them, provided they were as-

sessed according to the general ability to pay of each inhabitant of the county; as in all reason and justice they ought to be; since they are applied to purposes of general advantage. They are, however, at present raised principally upon the landed proprietors; and, with respect to some parts of the county rate, very unequally even upon them: so that, as long as the interests of one set of individuals, shall so far prevail over the general welfare of the community, as to permit the continuance of these abuses in making rates, it would contribute much more to the fair and equal distribution of the burthen among all classes receiving the benefit, if the sums in question were paid out of the general produce of the taxes. At all events the church and county rates should be kept perfectly distinct from those made exclusively for the relief of the poor; with which they have no connexion whatever, except that they are levied in the same manner: and the confounding of them together, has more than once thrown an imputation upon the Poor Laws, which they do not deserve; by giving opportunity to the discontented of including both sums in their amount: thus affording additional force

(where superior information is not present to correct the mistake) to that roundness of assertion, with which invective is usually accompanied.

§ 33. We will now proceed to the consideration of the supply of food in England; in the course of which, will be investigated the causes of those scarcities of corn, which have more than once occurred in the course of the last twenty years: a subject of the deepest importance, as it affects the interests of the public in general, and those of the poor in particular; whose situation they have already considerably influenced, and which, if permitted often to recur, might lead to the most serious and dismal consequences. "Mutati in deterius principâtûs initium ille annus attulit: plebs acri quidem annonâ fatigabatur: sed nulla in eo culpa ex principe, quin infecunditati terrarum, aut asperis maris obviam iit, quantum impendio, diligentiâque poterat*."

* Tacitus, Annal. lib. iv. sect. 6.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE SUPPLY OF FOOD IN ENGLAND, AND THE INCONVENIENCES OF ITS PRESENT STATE, PARTICULARLY AS IT AFFCTS THE POOR.

§ 1. The Poor Laws of England have been accused of depressing the condition of the poor, because they encourage population, without encouraging the growth of food for its support: an accusation that does not appear more reasonable, than if one were made against the bills for lighting the streets of London and Westminster, because they increase the consumption of oil, without encouraging the catching of whales for its supply. Both laws were made with the intention to produce a specific beneficial purpose; and must stand or fall by their merits, and efficiency in promoting those ends only: they ought not to be blamed because they do not promote every other. Certainly, if they produced serious evils, which other laws could not counteract, there might be room for

censure in that respect; but it is difficult to imagine any thing more unreasonable, than the complaint implied against them, for not producing effects entirely foreign to their operation; and which other laws, founded on proper principles, might be made to produce.

§ 2. If it be advisable to promote the increase of population, and to prevent the aged and infirm from starving; the Poor Laws which effect this, attain their object; and should be preserved, though they may not directly encourage the production of a single blade of corn. Upon the same principle, if it be advisable to prevent passengers from breaking their necks, the laws for lighting the streets, which effect this beneficial purpose, should not be abolished, though they cannot be proved to have been directly accessary to the capture of a single whale. In both cases, should the increased demand for food, or oil, not sufficiently encourage their production, new laws should be made to obviate the difficulties that impede it: it would be but short-sighted policy to avoid this trouble, by giving up superior advantages, because they have produced this increased demand.

§ 3. In fact, it will probably be found, that if the condition of the poor is depressed in England, in consequence of the short supply of food, the effect is not the consequence of the Poor Laws, but of the superior profit from commerce and manufactures, compared with what can be made by labour bestowed on raising food: which superior profit arises, partly from the increasing demand before noticed; and partly from the unequal manner in which land is burthened. This latter cause will be the subject of the next chapter; the object of this is—to establish the fact, that the short supply of food does really proceed, in a great measure, from our increased commercial prosperity, and not from the other causes usually assigned. If the reasons given for this opinion should appear satisfactory, we shall be able, from a knowledge of the true cause, to form a more correct judgment how far the evil is capable of remedy; and what measures are most calculated to palliate or remove it.

§ 4. The principal cause, which has been assigned, and very universally admitted, as having produced the deficit of corn, which England is now obliged to make up by im-

portation, is, the various alterations continually made in the letter and practice of the corn laws. Bounties upon exportation have been vehemently called for, as if they alone would restore a surplus quantity of food; because it has been found, on a reference to history, that such bounties existed during the period, in which we possessed the largest surplus produce. But it is evident, that so long as the present situation of things prevents the utmost exertions, which can be made upon the land, under its actual circumstances, from supplying the increasing demands of its inhabitants; a bounty to encourage a further produce for exportation, must be a mere dead letter; and can never begin to operate, till the supply becomes more equal to the internal demand; either by some impediments in commercial speculations forcing a larger proportion of capital into those upon land; or by encouraging cultivation, by the removal of some of the burthens which unfairly depress it. That the continuance of laws, granting bounties upon exportation, in the Statute Book can do no harm, is readily admitted; perhaps they may even operate advantageously on an overcautious farmer, by making his as-

surance of a market for his produce doubly sure: but that the want of them has had any material effect in inverting the practice of this country, from the exportation to the importation of corn, is with great submission denied.

§ 5. It is true, that the laws, permitting the importation of corn when at a certain price in the home market, have thereby fixed a maximum upon the produce of land; which, unless it be relieved from other burthens, must in some measure check its cultivation: as this maximum, however, is, in respect to the manufactures, of great advantage to the country, we may perhaps be convinced that it would be more politic to let it continue, and remove the other burthens as a compensation. But it is clear, that these laws could never have operated to discourage agriculture, while our own supply of corn was so plentiful, and its price so low, that we could profitably export it to other countries; since it would then be absurd to suppose, that they could profitably export theirs to our market: the existence of these laws, therefore, could have contributed as little, as the want of

bounties, to the inversion of our practice as to exportation of corn.

§ 6. We must evidently look deeper than the surface of the Statute Book, for the reasons to determine our opinion in this case. It is a question of the very last importance to the country in general, inasmuch as the cause of the late scarcities, with which it has been afflicted, will be found to form a part of it; and as it has a close connexion with some of the principal arguments which have been used against the Poor Laws, it will be necessary to enter into it at some length.

§ 7. It will not be important for our present purpose, to go very far back into the history of the Corn Laws. It has been already observed, that, before the Revolution, the agriculture of England was comparatively in a very decrepit state. The abuses of purveyance, the licenses of monopoly, and the unbounded permission given to the importation of corn, were so intolerable, that much of the best land in England lay waste, and had done so for centuries. Indeed it is impossible that other consequences

should have followed the confined, or mistaken policy of our princes before that period; who rather had in view to draw a revenue immediately from the corn trade, than, by regulations on more enlarged and liberal principles, to encourage the improvement of agriculture, and the general prosperity of the country; and thus secure to themselves the power of levying a revenue of twenty times the amount. So true it is, that selfish policy grasping immediate advantages, without regard to future consequences, always defeats its own ends.

§ 8. From the year 1570, many laws were made verbally encouraging agriculture, by allowing exportation; (which shews that the true principles of policy on the subject were partly understood;) but they embarrassed it with duties of from ten to fifty *per cent. ad valorem*; and with very trifling exception allowed an unlimited importation: which is one, among many other proofs, that before the Revolution, the personal interests of the prince upon the throne, rather than the general welfare, were too often the rule of administration. But when this system was changed at that glorious period,

a different policy was adopted with respect to the Corn Laws: bounties were then given upon exportation; high duties laid upon corn imported; and twelve years afterwards, (in 1700,) the duties payable on exportation were in all cases abolished. But the high duties upon importation being often evaded, from the difficulty, and neglect in ascertaining the price of corn in the home market; the system was completed in 1732, by a law obliging the grand juries, at every quarter sessions of the maritime counties, to present the average prices of corn; and the justices to transmit them to the officers of the customs at the ports, in order to enforce a fair and strict collection of the duties. These wise alterations operated like magic, and placed England in some measure in the situation of a newly-settled country. Good land, long in waste from former discouragements, could be had cheap; farms easily procured; and the soil being fresh, and producing abundantly, could therefore be cultivated at a large profit, as soon as it was eased of a part of the discouragements under which it laboured. The effects were such as might be expected; the people were, with very few exceptions, plentifully supplied

with food at a moderate price; and so large an exportation of grain shortly took place, that the annual average was never less than 300,000 quarters; and in the twenty years of greatest prosperity, (from 1740 to 1760;) it amounted to upwards of 700,000 quarters of all kinds of grain.

§ 9. This effect of the Corn Laws, established after the Revolution, is the ground upon which those, who think a recurrence to the same system would produce the same effect, rest their arguments. But do they consider the different condition of the internal demand for corn, and the state of the soil yet uncultivated, between that period and the present? Do they reflect upon the manufacturing population now existing, which then was not even thought of? The demand from whom must operate, at least as much as any bounty could do, in securing a market for such corn, as the cultivator can bring to it, under the present state of the soil? And are they further aware of the danger that would arise to the manufacturing interests, if the price at which importation is permitted should be raised so high, as to counterbalance the other disadvantages, un-

der which land labours; and thus really give encouragement to agriculture? If any part of this has escaped their attention, a due consideration of it may perhaps change their opinion; and induce them to think, that other measures, besides mere regulation of the export and import of corn, are necessary to raise the internal supply of food up to the demand, without injury to the general prosperity.

§ 10. To return; from the year 1760 to 1767 the exporting balance gradually decreased, till in the last year it wholly ceased; and England has from that time continued gradually importing more and more grain, till the average importation amounts at present to above a million of quarters yearly. Because it was found necessary to alter the Corn Laws, about the time this change in the trade took place; it has been with some appearance of reason ascribed to the discouragement said to be given to agriculture by that alteration. Now, had we regular returns of the population since the year 1740; a comparison of it with what has been observed, or can certainly be learned, of the increase or diminution of agriculture, would

clearly shew, whether the change alluded to has arisen from a greater increase of people, or a neglect of cultivation. But as these returns do not exist, we must be content with the evidence already before us in the former parts of this Inquiry; merely restating such parts of it, as are most essential to the comprehension of this particular subject, in a manner to illustrate it as strongly as possible; keeping always in our mind this minor consideration, that the waste of grain will always bear some proportion to the increase of luxury and riches.

§ 11. During the period that England exported the greatest quantity of corn, (from 1740 to 1760,) its general exports varied, without any sudden increase or decrease, from nine to twelve millions; and the British shipping from about four to six hundred thousand tons; of which the corn alone occupied above 140,000, reckoning five quarters of grain to a ton: this was the whole increase in twenty years. From 1760 to 1766, during which the balance of the export above the import of corn gradually *diminished*, the *general* exports *rose* from twelve to near sixteen millions, and the shipping

from six to seven hundred thousand tons in six years; and from that year, when the balance with respect to corn became wholly on the importing side, to the second year of the American war, (1776,) the general exports rose from sixteen to nineteen millions, and the shipping from seven to about eight hundred thousand tons in ten years.

§ 12. But it is clear, that if we wish to discover the real increase of *manufactures exported*, we must add to this account the money received, and shipping employed before on account of *corn exported*; because that corn was now consumed at home, and its place in the exports occupied by other commodities: this will make the account of the general exports from 1760 to 1776 stand thus:

	£
To increase stated in Custom-house books - -	7,000,000
Add on account of corn consumed at home, which was formerly exported, 700,000 quarters at 1*l.* 15*s.* the qr.	1,225,000
Total	8,225,000

Increase of tons of shipping exporting manufactures in the same period:

	Tons.
To that stated in Custom-house books - - -	200,000
Formerly occupied by corn now consumed at home -	140,000
Tons	340,000

Here then is an increase of more than one half in shipping and exports of manufactures in sixteen years; while in the twenty preceding years, deducting the corn, the increase did not amount to one sixth.

§ 13. As none of these goods could be procured, nor operations performed without labour; there must have been a proportionate increase of men, and labouring animals employed, and consequently of mouths to be fed. If we consider the immense quantity of labour, and carriage, necessary to construct 200,000 tons of shipping, to manufacture, convey to the sea, and export so large a proportion of eight million's worth of goods, (official value *,) as may fairly be supposed to

* The official value was supposed in 1803, to fall short of the real value about 75 per cent. Allowing for the decrease

be of our own manufacture; we may perhaps not only cease to wonder, that a quantity of corn was wanted for the subsistence of so many more beings, equal to the difference between an exporting balance of 700,000 quarters, and an importing one of 300,000; (or a million of quarters;) but be further inclined to admit, that that quantity could not have supplied so many additional mouths. Accordingly we find, that at the very time this extraordinary demand took place, great exertions were made for its supply from our own soil; notwithstanding the alteration of the laws so much complained of, and the other burthens on the land.

§ 14. The detail of these exertions will not only convince us, that the agriculture of the country was very far indeed from dwindling at this period; but is absolutely necessary to complete the proof, that the deficiency of food complained of did arise solely from the increase of manufacturing population; in consequence of the superior profits from

in the value of money, perhaps we may fairly estimate the difference in 1776, at about 40 per cent. which would bring the £8,225,000, to £11,915,000, real increase of the exports in sixteen years.

those employments, beyond what the power of the land, under its existing burthens, could by any exertion supply with food. For if the exertions in agriculture, introduced in the early part of the century, had ceased upon the increase of trade, and manufactures; the check given to that of population, employed in agriculture, might in some degree be set against the encouragement given to that employed in other occupations. But if the former retained a great share of vigour, during the increase of the latter; and even grew with its growth, though in a slower degree; it can neither be denied, that the population employed in the various departments of commerce, and manufactures, was a clear addition to that of the state; nor that the deficiency in their supply of food did not arise from the absolute decrease of that article, but from the great and extraordinary increase in the number of mouths.

§ 15. Let us then compare the number of the enclosures of waste lands, in the twenty years of our greatest exportation of grain, and most favourable state of the corn laws, with the sixteen years of the opposite period; and we shall find, that in the former period

of twenty years (1740 to 1760) there were made,

150 enclosures, or an average of 7½ *per annum:*

in the latter period of sixteen years (1760 to 1776)

743 enclosures, or an average of 46 *per annum:*

making an annual difference of thirty-nine enclosures. Allowing to each enclosure 1000 acres, an allowance less than facts advanced on good authority would seem to justify *; there was an annual increase of improvement bestowed on 39,000 acres: and at the end of this period, which has been stigmatized as one of *discouragement, bad policy, and ruin* to agriculture, there were 743,000 acres more of improved land in England, than

* Mr. Arthur Young states, that 2,800,000 acres of land were enclosed in the latter half of the last century; which, divided by 1954 the number of enclosure acts during the same period, gives to each enclosure 1433 acres. It must not be supposed however, that this number of fresh acres were brought into cultivation; a very large proportion of them were cultivated before; but an improved mode of tillage has probably been introduced upon all of them.

existed in the former period of *prosperity, and good policy.*

§ 16. So much for the period in which the short supply of food in England first took place. It would be tedious to recapitulate what has been before observed, as to the wonderful increase of manufacturing, and commercial population, since that time. Suffice it to repeat, that the shipping and exports have much more than doubled; but so copious a stream of the wealth thus acquired has flowed upon the soil, that from the end of the American war, (during which both agriculture, and commerce dwindled,) *i. e.* from 1787, to 1803, the number of enclosures of waste lands has been 918; or an annual average of 61. The total number of enclosures from 1760 to 1803 amounted to 2049, which allowing 1000 acres to each, as above calculated, have added in forty-two years 2,049,000 acres to the improved cultivation of the country; part of which have been wholly converted from useless to productive soil, and the rest very much improved.

§ 17. But as the general production of the other lands, which were before in cultivation,

has been much increased by the improvement of agricultural skill; we may, by estimating this latter increase at a twenty-second of the whole produce of the soil as it existed in 1760, carry that of the 2,049,000 acres to the amount of absolute increase in agricultural produce from the two * sources of enclosure, and improvement since that year. Now, supposing with Mr. Mackie † of Ormiston, that 504 acres of very rich land, highly cultivated, will feed 392 people, old and young, on the usual mixed fare of the English people, besides supporting the agricultural cattle; we cannot estimate the average power of the land in England, to be more than equal to

* This estimate is formed upon the following data. The quantity of acres in cultivation in England and Wales in 1760 were according to estimates since formed 38,000,000: and calculating the 2049 enclosures since made, to have each contained, on an average, 200 acres of land never before cultivated; 409,800 acres of fresh land, brought into a productive state, are to be deducted from 2,049,000 acres, the whole number contained in the enclosures; which will leave 1,639,000 acres before in cultivation: but an addition of a twenty-second to the produce of 38,000,000 acres, will be about equal to the whole produce of 1,639,000 acres, cultivated in the original manner; which number of acres may therefore be added, in lieu of it, to the total estimated increase in the produce of the soil.

† In his Letters at the end of Dirom on the Corn Laws.

the support of one person to two acres. Food therefore for 1,024,500 additional people has been added to the general production of the country.

§ 18. The difference between an annual exportation of 700,000 quarters (in 1760) and an importation of 1,000,000 quarters (about our present average) is 1,700,000 quarters; which, reckoning sixteen bushels as equal to each individual's consumption in all his demands *; and deducting 800,000 quarters for the additional beasts of burthen, draught, and pleasure; and 200,000 quarters for use in manufacturing, and waste in luxury, will leave a clear surplus for the food of man of 700,000 quarters: sufficient to supply 350,000 additional people; who with the 1,024,500 provided for by additional home produce make a total of 1,374,500 persons supported from both resources, and added to the population of the country since 1760. This is a calculation not very wide of the estimate of 8,000,000 made on various occasions in the first twenty years of the present reign, and 9,343,578, the total product of the enumera-

* This quantity of grain has been calculated, with apparent justice, to be expended, on an average, in the support of each person for bread, beer, spirits, &c. &c.

tion under the Population Act of 1800. This calculation is likewise supported by the consideration of the number of persons at least necessary, to carry on the various operations of commerce, and agriculture above stated.

§ 19. He that fairly considers these facts, and calculations; and the several ways in which commerce and opulence tend to increase population; may perhaps be inclined to admit, that the deficiency in the supply of corn did not arise, or continue, from any decrease in agriculture, but from the great increase of manufactures. He likewise will be decidedly of opinion, that supposing the same number of enclosures, and the same improvements in agriculture to have taken place, with rather a smaller increase in manufactures, the deficiency would either never have taken place, or have been long ago remedied. For, (as has been fairly calculated by Mr. Dirom *,) one person employed in agriculture being able on an average to feed himself, and four others; it follows that the food for 1,024,500 persons, additionally raised in England since 1760, employs but a fifth

* In his work upon the Corn Laws.

part of that number, or 204,700, (besides a further reduction from these by improved modes of cultivation;) the remaining 819,800 being employed in all the other occupations. This seems as large a proportion as can usually be required for such purposes in forty-two years; and had they sufficed for us, no deficiency of food would have occurred: but the miraculous increase of our commercial demand has so far outrun all probable calculation, that food for near a third more has been found necessary. It is clear however, that every advantage which a great demand for food can give to cultivation, (under the other discouragements it labours against,) actually exists: but as it is necessary to the general welfare, that its full operation should be restricted by a moderate importation price; the only chance of augmenting the cultivation of the thirty millions of acres still lying waste, in a ratio faster than that in which it has hitherto proceeded, is—to compensate this restriction, by relieving the land from the impolitic, and unequal burthens it is forced exclusively to sustain in other respects; as far as such relief can be given without injury to the general prosperity.

§ 20. In truth, could means have been found to place the profits from improvements bestowed upon land, on a par with those from commerce and manufactures, at the time when the increase of the population, employed in these last pursuits, first fairly outran that employed in agriculture, in spite of the favourable state of the corn laws; the deficiency of supply, and its inconveniences, would have been remedied at once. An inquiry how far this might have been done at that time, by relieving the land from certain burthens it exclusively bore, would be rather prolix; and moreover, should the measure be found to have been feasible, would only excite regret at the inconvenience we are suffering, through the oversight of our predecessors. But nothing can be more incontestable, than that if commerce and manufactures outran agriculture, notwithstanding a favourable state of the laws for its encouragement, (as far as importation and exportation were concerned;) the circumstance must have arisen from other counteracting disabilities in the land, which enabled capital vested in the former employments to return a superior profit.

§ 21. If the foregoing arguments have been sufficient to point out the causes, which really did produce the short supply of food in England; a few words more will be sufficient to prove, beyond all contradiction, that the alteration in the corn laws, so much complained of, could have had no share whatever in producing it.—The alteration in the balances of import and export of corn began in 1762, and they were completely reversed in 1767; during which interval, the price of wheat had been gradually rising from 1*l.* 19*s.* to 3*l.* 4*s.* the quarter: yet it was not till the last of those years, that even a temporary law was made, prohibiting the exportation, and allowing the importation of corn: and this was enacted in consequence of disturbances from the scarcity and dearness of corn, and petitions to Parliament from London and other places. But no permanent law of the above nature was made till the year 1773, six years after the deficiency of supply became complete, and established; and it appeared to the Legislature, that no other means, but such as would have checked the manufactures, and consequently interfered with the general welfare of the community, would immediately have been sufficient to remedy the inconvenience. Un-

less therefore effects be allowed to precede their causes in the order of time, a law made in 1773 can scarcely have produced a short supply of food in 1767.

§ 22. Having thus taken a cursory review of the causes that have produced the short supply of food in England, we may be able to form some estimate of the chances that exist, of an adequate remedy being found for the inconvenience. Undoubtedly alterations in the corn laws are not to be recommended as adequate for the purpose; since bounties upon exportation would be nugatory, and a high importation price dangerous to the public, as hath been already shewn.

§ 23. Direct premiums upon improvements in agriculture, and the extension of cultivation, have been suggested. Perhaps a few honorary distinctions, derived from the proper source of honour, might have some effect: but the distribution of pecuniary premiums would be too apt, in this country, to become the engine of abuse for political and party purposes. Could this, however, be guarded against, they might certainly do some

good in encouraging those expensive experiments, or improvements, which, though calculated for the public good, are rather uncertain as to the returns they may make, to the individuals undertaking them.

§ 24. Nevertheless, these expedients are of too partial and confined an operation, to introduce a sufficient alteration in the state of agriculture; which, it may well be supposed, can only be brought about by measures of a more general influence: in short, by releasing the land from every species of oppression, which can be removed without public injury. To what extent this is practicable will be considered in the following chapter; let us now examine into the real evils we suffer from this deficiency in the supply of food.

§ 25. Those who agree in what was advanced in a former chapter, with respect to the general probability of supply from the corn-exporting countries, to answer our regular demand; or who conceive that by proper encouragements to agriculture, much of that demand may be supplied from home; will be inclined to confine the real evils derived from the circumstance, to those periods in

which Providence afflicts the land with a year of deficient crops: on this occasion, as a supply cannot always be had at a short notice from abroad, beyond the regular demand of the country; and as the calamity is seldom confined to one part of England only, the evil is sometimes very pressing; and certainly would be palliated, though by no means entirely prevented, by an agriculture sufficiently flourishing to afford a general surplus for exportation. At the same time the loss of the usual returns for such corn exported, which must be sustained in a time of scarcity, would be a serious injury to commerce.

§ 26. Famines and scarcities, however, in civilized and enlightened countries, are deviations from the rules of nature; and from the ordinary course of the goodness of Providence. As they seldom occur in the common course of things, it is hardly fair to make use of them, as an argument against any system, calculated in other respects to produce regular beneficial effects. But scarcities have in fact, by the permission of Providence, occurred twice in this country within a few years; and among other bad effects have forced many of the poor, who could otherwise have

subsisted without parish assistance, to become pensioners on the rates. They have thereby much diminished the independent spirit of the better sort of the peasantry without an adequate return of advantage; and have introduced a partial system of fraud, which the attention bestowed has not hitherto been able to eradicate.

§ 27. What has happened more than once, may certainly in the same state of society recur again: all attempts therefore to point out such means, as may either obviate the ill effects, flowing from it, or entirely prevent its recurrence, cannot but be well received. It is not to be expected that any expedient whatever can be found, *immediately* to counteract a mischief, which has been so many years collecting, and extending; and which in fact must now be considered as part of the price paid by the country for the advantages it reaps from its extensive commerce. This consideration renders the discovery of a remedy more difficult; because it excludes the removal of the cause which produced the mischief, from forming any part of the plan for its cure; since such means would introduce evils more pernicious than that, which is here to be considered.

§. 28. Among the palliatives of the evil, the use of substitutes is certainly the most obvious, if not the only effectual one; and should usually, on the recurrence of the occasion, be strictly enforced by law, though not entirely without exception. The author of the Essay on Population has well portrayed the bad effects, arising from the neglect of such precautions during the late scarcities; which no doubt, as far as abstract reasoning goes, could not be justified. But if the political circumstances of those times are considered, and the number of evil-disposed persons constantly on the watch, who made use of the powerful argument of hunger, to alienate the affections of the people from their country and its constitution; which, as they asserted, provided only for the welfare of the rich, while it starved, and pinched the poor; a reasonable doubt may be entertained, whether the evils, that might have attended any violent innovation in their fixed habits, and prejudices, would not, (by adding fuel to the flame) have produced worse consequences, than are admitted to have followed from the neglect complained of. The violent passions, which were then working among the mass of the people pro-

duced, as it was, effects sufficiently distressing, to excite a reasonable fear of the great hazard, incident upon any further interference with their comforts, or (more properly speaking perhaps) their prejudices.

§ 29. Prevention, however is better than cure; and it is perfectly surprising, that though the calamity was on all hands allowed to have endangered the welfare of the country, five years have elapsed since the last scarcity, without any measure being adopted to prevent its recurrence: for the corn laws, passed a short time ago, can hardly be said to be such a measure. Admitting the impossibility of quickly increasing the produce of our own land, to an extent capable of rendering the supply of food as regular as possible to its inhabitants, in a year of deficient crops; the only feasible resource, till so desirable an event can be brought about, seems to be, the securing a certain supply from abroad; which may always be had upon an extraordinary emergency, at a comparatively reasonable price; and yet may not interfere, in ordinary times, with the due encouragement to which agriculture is entitled.

§ 30. In searching for, or venturing to suggest means, for insuring at all times a supply of foreign corn, adequate to any deficiency, that can be supposed possible to arise from a scantiness of crops; these ingredients must never be kept out of view. First, that such corn should never be brought to our own market, or to any other concerned in providing our ordinary supply; except in the case of corn in those markets being at a scarcity price: if these precautions were not taken, the extraordinary supply would soon have no other effect than that of driving the ordinary one out of the market; whose place it would occupy; and thus, by ceasing to be an extraordinary supply, would totally obviate the benefits to be expected from it, in times of scarcity. Secondly, that every precaution should be taken to prevent the corn, raised for this purpose, from becoming the ordinary supply of our own colonies; or indeed of any other country that shall depend chiefly upon it for support: because in that case, whenever the scarcity in England was such, as to make it necessary to call for the extraordinary supply; it would only be taking it out of the mouths of others; and starving them to feed ourselves; a measure

that never could be entertained for a moment. Thirdly, the certainty of this supply in case of need, should not relax the efforts of government to bring England once more into the state of a country exporting corn, by such direct encouragements to agriculture, as may under all circumstances be thought proper, and by relieving the land from all unfair burthens: but it should be considered merely as a temporary expedient, to be got rid of as soon as a more solid foundation of plenty shall be laid in the resources from internal production.

§ 31. Could these restrictions and precautions be insured, there does not appear any objection of a serious nature, to using such of our colonies, as possess a rich soil calculated for the growth of corn; are in an infant state of cultivation; situated at such a distance as not to allow of smuggling the corn to England; and yet near enough to be within reach of timely notice; as farms, and granaries to supply England with wheat in times of scarcity.

§ 32. Mr. Barrow, in his luminous and excellent account of the Cape of Good Hope,

states that some of the land there, under all the disadvantages of miserable cultivation, and want of proper instruments of agriculture, returns from twenty to forty bushels, for one put into the ground: which is a produce at least double that of the well-cultivated lands in England. The quality of the wheat is so excellent, that a small cargo sent to England sold in Mark Lane at a higher price, than any corn brought to market on the same day. There is every reason to suppose that Buenos Ayres is likewise capable of an abundant produce: Canada is known to be so: and all three are in a state of perfect infancy as to agriculture; with lands untouched, capable in many instances of producing several successive crops of grain, without manure, or the intervention of fallows, or green crops *.

§ 33. Now, if these colonies are to remain in our possession, which for many reasons is devoutly to be wished by every friend of his country; let us suppose that it may be

* Mr. Barrow states his opinion very decidedly, that with proper improvements at the Cape of Good Hope, *an abundance of surplus produce* might be acquired for exportation *in the course of a few years*.

thought good policy to encourage their agriculture, both directly and by allowing the exportation of corn from them in British bottoms; and its importation into England, as part of the ordinary supply of the market, at the present importation prices; which have been resolved to be such as to encourage the growth of corn at home: (an idea not quite correct perhaps, though the importation price is probably as high, as is consistent with the general interests of the country.)

§ 34. This part of the measure would of itself not only produce an increase of shipping, and a nursery for seamen; but could not fail to be agreeable to those, who entertain fears of the stoppage of our regular supply from foreign countries, through their desire to starve us into a submission to their demands *. For such fears can surely never

* Since this was written, the French have made such formidable and surprising progress in the Prussian dominions, that temporary difficulties may perhaps occur, in the usual supply of corn brought to our markets from Poland, and Prussia; an additional argument for adopting the system of colonial supply stated in the text: though the deficiency from these two countries will certainly be supplied, if necessary, by the other nations exporting corn; as soon as the increased demand for their produce has had its operation.

extend to our own colonies, of which we are at least certain to retain possession, till a long course of years has raised them to considerable consequence in power and riches. Unless indeed a calculation is to be made, admitting our loss of the power of protecting our *colonies*, and *commerce*, by the strength of our *navy*: in which case, it is sufficiently evident, that a supply of imported corn, or any other article either from the colonies, or other countries, would entirely depend upon the mercy of our enemies; whose generosity towards us would probably be limited to the importation of French troops. In truth, if we are to speculate upon the loss of our naval power, it would be better at once to shut up our manufactories, and resign our colonies; since every step made in their improvement, however necessary to our present welfare or existence, would only operate just so much against us, should we be struck out of the list of naval nations, and reduced to the mere physical force of our own islands. But if such a measure would inevitably lead to ruin, what remains, but that we turn to the best account at present, those advantages put into our hands by Providence, to enable us to resist the storm that gathers around us:

which if we can weather by any means, no consequences, which those means can bring upon posterity, can justly be repined at by them; since they should be considered as the price of independence, and existence. Should political existence, and independence descend to our grandchildren, they *must* be in a situation more capable of enduring those consequences, than we are of dispensing with the measures that may produce them.

§ 35. To return then: supposing this encouragement to agriculture to have operated on the colonies, (with the assistance of such particular measures as their local circumstances may require *,) to the extent of producing a surplus produce of corn: in order to establish an extraordinary supply to answer any sudden demand from home, the governors of the colonies, fixed upon for the purpose, should have orders to collect a certain portion of the taxes in wheat; and

* Mr. Barrow asserts that the introduction of a number of Chinese, who might easily be induced to settle at the Cape, would be necessary to bring it into the state of a well-cultivated country; because their skill and industry are necessary to replace the brutish and phlegmatic stupidity of the Dutch Cape Boor.

to establish warehouses for its safe keeping till a certain day, beyond the period at which advice of the probability of short crops in England might reach them: which if they did not receive, the corn in store should be forthwith exported, even at a loss; but on no account suffered to be sold in the colony, unless it should (for want of opportunity of exporting it) be kept to a future year, which should turn out to be one of deficient crops: a circumstance that could not well happen in such a state of cultivation as would be introduced.

§ 36. With respect to the sale of the corn warehoused in the three colonies, in such years as it might not be required in England; since in the number of nations within reach, some one, or more would probably from badness of seasons, or other causes, be always found, to whom a supply of foreign corn would be convenient; the general knowledge, that such a supply was there to be had, would bring the ships of the countries possessing the carrying trade to purchase it, should the enterprise of our own merchants not undertake the traffic.

§ 37. In the mean time, a constant supply for extraordinary occasions would exist, totally distinct from that grown to answer our ordinary demand; and which never could be brought to operate against the agriculture of this country, if properly secured from coming into competition with corn grown at home, by a high importation price. But it would at all times, by feeding the market in periods of scarcity, to the extent of any probable demand, prevent the serious evils we have seen to arise from a very *exorbitant rise* in the price of bread-corn.

§ 38. Moreover, should such extraordinary supply ever become unnecessary, by the increase of the produce of land at home to the extent of supplying the demand; the colonies, far from being injured, will have been highly benefited by the operation: since during the time this encouragement was given to their agriculture, they will have been placed in that very situation, which (it appears from the early part of this Inquiry) is the most favourable to a rapid progress towards national prosperity; and will have been acquiring strength, and means, to make further strides towards it.

§ 39. If it be objected, that some years would be necessary to bring such a plan to perfection; it may be answered, that if quicker means can be found, let them be adopted in preference: but that there is great reason to fear, it will require many more years to bring England into the situation of a country exporting corn. Till such an event can be brought about, a supply that can be depended upon at a few weeks notice, upon any emergency, is an object of the greatest importance, both to the poor, and the country in general.

§ 40. Should the expedient here suggested be thought worthy of attention, it should be understood that there would be no necessity for warehousing any grain except wheat; because it appears, that the crops of that grain are more liable to failure in England than those of other corn. During the scarcity of 1800 we only imported an additional 100,000 quarters either of oats or barley, but of wheat above 600,000 quarters more than the usual average importation.

§ 41. Now the land in two of the above-mentioned colonies may be calculated at a low esti-

mate to produce upon an average six quarters of wheat upon an acre; and from the freshness of the soil and mildness of the climate in two of them, a crop of wheat may be reckoned upon at least once in every two years. The quantity of cultivated land therefore, necessary to supply the probable extra-deficit of corn in England, in years of very deficient crops, would be about 200,000 acres; less than the four hundredth part of the territory of the Cape of Good Hope alone; and which, divided between it, and the colonies before mentioned, would probably not amount to the twelve hundredth part of their territory *. The population necessary to raise this supply may be estimated at about 25,000 persons; most of whom should be Chinese, or other *free proprietors* and labourers, either taken from among the present inhabitants of the colonies, or tempted to migrate from their own countries, by the prospect of enjoying the sweets of property, or escaping the inconveniences of too full a population at home. By these means, there would be no necessity for increasing the abominable traffic in slaves

* Many parts however, of the territory of these colonies are not at present capable of cultivation—*Vide* the Account of the Karroo Deserts in Barrow's Southern Africa.

on this account; nor will the substitute for it appear chimerical or insufficient to those, who have perused Mr. Barrow's works, and have as good reason, as the author of this Inquiry, to be satisfied of their scrupulous accuracy, and truth *.

§ 42. Two further objections may probably be made to the whole plan of this colonial supply. Some may entertain fears that its ultimate tendency would be, to reduce England to a permanent dependance upon its foreign colonies for food; and it may decidedly be proved by the experience of other countries, that no nation, *permanently* supporting a very large proportion of its people upon imported corn, can expect to be so free from accidental interruptions to its prosperity, as those, who raise all their food at home.

* The feasibility of this expedient has been actually and satisfactorily proved, by a late importation of 200 Chinese into one of the West India islands; which has answered so well, that a great West India proprietor, Mr. B——m, has made a contract for 500 free Chinese to be delivered at his estate in Jamaica, with a proportion of women, to be settled in the plantations, whose *free labour* is to replace the *extorted toil* of the African slave. The only difficulty at present existing in this practice is that of procuring a sufficient number of women from the same quarter, to keep up the number of the new settlers.

While others may be tempted to exclaim; Why encourage cultivation at the distance of four thousand miles across the seas, when thirty millions of acres lie waste at home? To this latter question it is answered, that none of the measures here recommended would in the least interfere with agriculture at home; to encourage which by every possible means, consistent with the public welfare, has been before stated, and will be still further enforced to be the imperative duty of the government. Those who consider the high price, at which this extra-supply of corn is recommended to be admitted into the country, will at once be convinced how little it would interfere with any encouragement to cultivation at home: except indeed as far as the great profits made by some few fortunate farmers, who have plentiful crops in years of scarcity, may be said to operate as an encouragement to others, to take the same chance of a prize in the lottery; which, if the high price of corn in those years were moderated, would not exist. Few however will admit this as a fair argument against the measure. It is reasonable then to assert, that, provided all feasible encouragement be given to agriculture at home, no valid objection can be made to

the colonial supply proposed, on the ground of the number of acres, which may nevertheless remain uncultivated in the British islands.

§ 43. With respect to the permanent dependance upon our foreign colonies for food, to which the measure may be supposed calculated to reduce England; it may be observed, that it is already (for the time) dependant upon foreign countries for part of its food; which dependance the plan proposed only goes to transfer from foreign, and (as it has been said) perhaps inimical countries, to our own colonies, under our own control. If the question were, whether we should transfer the supply of our market, from our own soil to that of our colonies, there might be reason in the objection; but since we are at this moment dependant upon the produce of a foreign soil, it does not appear that the transfer actually recommended would at all increase that dependance.

§ 44. Neither would it become more permanent; unless we can suppose the Government, and the Legislature so far to forget

the duties of the charge committed to their care, as to bask in the sunshine of apparent prosperity, which the regularity introduced into the supply of the corn-market in all emergencies would cause; and be thereby prevented from making all such provisions as are consistent with the public good, for securing a permanent supply from our own soil. Such a degree of misconduct could not possibly occur under our representative system of government, provided a due degree of information upon this most important subject, were as widely spread throughout the public, as its great consequence to their welfare gives reason to hope, and expect, may one day be the case.

§ 45. The reader is requested to excuse this long digression upon the supply of food in England; which has been considered absolutely necessary, in many points of view, to the complete understanding of the subject principally treated in this Inquiry. In the first place, the fluctuations in the price of corn, which have arisen in consequence of the occasional deficiencies of supply, have already affected, and (if timely remedies be not applied) must still further affect the

condition of the poor, by the positive distress they occasion at the time of the pressure; and by the general interference of the irregularities they introduce, with any steady plan for ameliorating the situation of that useful, and interesting class of the community. The object to be attempted for the counteraction of these fluctuations, is of course to establish, (under all circumstances of seasons,) a tolerably uniform and regular supply of corn in the market, without throwing an unnecessary damp upon improvements in agriculture; or interfering with commerce and manufactures. For unless the object be attained without either of these consequences, the good acquired on one side will be counterbalanced by the evil on the other. So complicated an effect cannot be brought about by very simple means; and till better can be found, it is hoped those above suggested will not be deemed impertinent.

§ 46. In the next place, the knowledge of the real causes, that have produced a deficiency of the supply of food from English soil, is essential to the formation of a just opinion, concerning the expediency of the principal measure recommended in the following chap-

ter; viz. an equal distribution of the charge of supporting the poor throughout every class of persons of property. For if it appear from the past investigation, that the disproportionate increase of commerce, and manufactures (arising of course from their superior profits) is the cause of this deficiency in the quantity of corn, raised at home for the support of the people; it follows that the landed proprietor lies under some disability of augmenting his profits to a par with those of the manufacturer. And if any part of the present causes of that disability, such as the importing price, for example, should be found absolutely necessary to the general welfare of the community; that necessity affords the strongest possible argument, for compensating the disadvantage to the land, by relieving it from all other unequal burthens, which have not the same plea of necessity for their continuance; such, for example, as the exclusive payment of the poor's rate may be found to be.

§ 47. If the Legislature had adopted this policy to its full extent, at the time the interests of commerce obliged them to fix an importing price; it is more than probable,

that the deficiency in the supply of food would never have taken place to any great extent; but that the additional encouragement given to agriculture by lessening the outgoings of the cultivators, might have again brought up the supply to an equality with the demand; and thus rendered the continuance of a general system of importation unnecessary.

§ 48. That the same policy adopted now would *have a tendency* to produce so beneficial an effect, cannot be doubted: but it is reasonable to suppose, that after so long a course of years, during which the evil has been gaining ground, the remedy can neither be so effectual, or immediate in its operation, as if a more timely application had been made.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE COMPARATIVE ABILITY OF THE COUNTRY TO PAY THE POOR'S RATES, AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SUM LEVIED UNDER THEM THROUGHOUT THE PROPERTY OF THE COUNTRY.

§ 1. THE farmer who should complain of an increased expense of ten pounds a year in procuring and feeding an additional stock of working cattle; by the assistance of whose labour, it can be proved to him, that the profits upon his farm are annually increased an hundred pounds; would justly incur the imputation, not only of sordid avarice, but of gross ingratitude and rebellion against that law of the Divine Providence, which has established, that no man shall reap advantages, to sow the seeds of which he does not make some sacrifice, or exertion. Yet is such a man not so unreasonable as he, who repines at the expense incurred in assisting to support, and produce a population, the profits upon whose labour, there is reason to believe, return an addition of above

two hundred pounds for every ten pounds expended in their production and support. That this statement is not exaggerated, it will be the object of the sections immediately following to establish.

§ 2. It appears from a table given in the laborious and excellent work of Sir Frederick Eden upon the poor; that, as far as can be ascertained in former times, the amount of the Poor's Rates has never kept pace with the ability of the country to pay it; or, in other words, with the profits derived from the labour of those, whom the Poor Laws have assisted in rearing and supporting. If we make the same comparison between the years 1776 and 1803, we shall find the same result.

§ 3. It would be superfluous to state over again the facts already laid down in the course of this Inquiry, with respect to the increase of labour, and its produce. Referring to them, it will be sufficient to bring under the eye, at one view, a comparison of the augmentation of the rates, and that of the other sources of industry, between the two periods; and to shew that the ex-

pense of maintaining the poor, did not increase in proportion with the profits arising from most of the employments and sources producing national riches. This may be brought under the observation of every one in the annexed table; where the sums are all stated according to the value of money at the periods to which they refer; and, to avoid confusion, the nearest round numbers are taken.

A TABLE, shewing the comparative Amount of the Increase of the Poor's Rates, and of the various Sources of Income, between the Years 1776 and 1803.

Poor's Rate. 1776. 1803. £ £ 1,720,000—4,230,000 an increase of $2\frac{1}{2}$.	Real Value of Exports. 1776. 1803. £ £ 21,000,000—55,000,000 an increase of more than $2\frac{1}{2}$, viz. $2\frac{11}{21}$.
British Shipping. 1776. 1803. Tons. Tons. 778,000—2,226,000 nearly trebled.	Value of the Produce of the Fisheries imported. *1784. 1803. £ £ 127,000—484,000 nearly quadrupled.
Imports. 1776. 1803. £ £ 11,000,000—28,000,000 Increase of more than $2\frac{1}{4}$ viz. $2\frac{6}{11}$.	Income from Funds. 1776. 1803. £ £ 4,500,000—25,000,000 more than quintupled.

* The author has no means of ascertaining the amount of this produce in 1776.

The amount of increased income from land cannot be accurately ascertained; but by comparing the rates made for various purposes about 1776, with the real value of the land rated in 1803; the increased nominal income from land in the above period may perhaps be fairly estimated at seven millions sterling.

§ 4. The consideration of this table, it is presumed, will leave no doubt upon the mind as to the fact, that the comparative ability of the country to pay the Poor's Rates has more than kept pace with their increase; and that the addition to the rates of 2,500,000*l.* in those twenty-seven years compared with that to the exports of 34,000,000*l.* would give a charge of rather more than seven pounds, for every hundred pounds worth of goods produced for exportation. Not to mention the six other sources of riches stated in the table, which would reduce the charge to much less than three *per cent.*; and the amount of the augmentation in the inland trade, which cannot be ascertained, but which would still further reduce the proportion of the charge. So that, though it is impossible accurately to demonstrate the

total increase of the *clear profits* of the national industry in the above period, there is every reason to think their proportion to the Poor's Rates as great as was stated in the first section. It is however sufficiently established by the table, that the sources, from which the profits of the people could be drawn, have augmented in a ratio, higher than the rates themselves. All arguments, therefore, resting upon the assumption, that they are a great and growing burthen upon the community, interfering with its prosperity, and gradually eating up its profits, must fall to the ground; or at least must change their foundation from the *amount* of the rates to the unfair manner of their *distribution* among the persons possessing property. For though the assumption of the justice of these complaints is not borne out by fact, as far as concerns the whole community; they are perfectly justifiable, and in every part true and correct, when applied to that part of it, exclusively burthened with the support of the Poor; which brings us to the second, and principal subject intended for discussion in this chapter.

§ 5. The perusal of that period of the history of France, which treats of the inte-

resting events preceding the late revolution, leaves no doubt upon the mind, that the pecuniary difficulties in which that country was involved, and which had so large a share in the production of the revolution, did not arise from a want of resources in the country to free itself from them, but from the abominable partiality with which those resources were called forth. If the taxes were unproductive, and the consequent number of them too heavy for the country to bear; it was because that order of the community, most able to pay them, and most benefited by their payment, were exempt from their proportionate charge. There is every reason to suppose, that if M. de Calonne's proposal for taxing the property of the privileged orders, in proportion with the rest, had not been defeated, through their short-sighted selfishness; the horrors which ensued might have been averted: and those orders might at this moment have been in possession of the fair, and just remainder of their property, after payment of such part of it, as every individual is bound to contribute, according to his means, to the general support of the state. The effect of such partiality is not confined to the finances:

it operates upon the mind; and from the nature of man must embitter it against those, for whose exclusive advantage he is suffering.

§ 6. Let this example be a warning to the merchants, stockholders, and manufacturers of this country; (who, if their interests could with good policy be separated from those of the landowner, have a very superior one in the existence of a redundant population;) lest they, by refusing to contribute to the support of a population created by their demand, reared for their use, and worn out in their service, should at length throw so intolerable a burthen upon the land; that an absolute necessity will arise for getting rid of the evil and advantages together: and they shall find too late, that by grasping at all, they have lost all. To whatever extent the evil, if not remedied, may be actually found to reach; it is incontestable, that the ultimate effects, on any society, of a law, confining the operation of a tax to less than one half of the community benefited by it, cannot but be most fatal: particularly if the operation of the tax itself should tend to diminish the means of payment, in those exclusively bound to discharge it. That the present proportions, in which the sums, raised

under the Poor Laws, are levied upon the several classes of society, have such a tendency, will appear from the following deduction.

§ 7. The rates were established at a time when the greater part of the profits of the nation arose from land, and the simple trades connected with agriculture. In such a state, and during the infancy of manufactures, good policy might dictate the encouragement of these last, by a declaration that their share of the support of the poor should be borne by the land; a policy which was in fact admitted in early practice, and sanctioned by the first decisions of the courts of law. But from the moment the profits from manufactures became greater than those from land; and they were nevertheless permitted to continue rearing themselves to a wide extent, freed from their share of this burthen; a premium was established, tending to encourage a capitalist to lay out his money in trade, rather than on land. And however for a short time, peculiar circumstances might encourage cultivation, in spite of this premium, while the land still to be procured continued of a superior staple; as was the

case in England for some part of the sixty years after the Revolution: yet in proportion as the lands best calculated to make large returns were brought into cultivation, and it became necessary to invest a larger capital, to acquire the same produce from those of an inferior staple; circumstances of minor encouragement would cease to operate against this further reduction of profit: and the landed proprietor, after payment of the poor's rates, would be still less upon a level with the merchant and manufacturer, not burthened with them.

§ 8. This effect must force a further employment of capital into commerce, and manufactures; and by thus creating an additional demand for people in those pursuits, must throw a further addition of poor's rates upon the land; at the same time that, by comparatively discouraging its cultivation, it renders it less equal to bear it: as seems to have been the case since England ceased to export corn; though not, as we have seen in the detail of our agricultural exertions, to the extent that might be expected.

§ 9. There must have been a moment in the last century, in which the encourage-

ment to a capitalist to lay out his money in land, or in trade, was equal. From that moment the agriculturist and merchant of England seem to have been in the situation of two brothers, living in one house, and entering into separate trades; each holding out a fair prospect of making the same returns: but with a condition established between them, that the elder brother should pay all the house-rent; lodge, and support the apprentices of both, (at those times when they were not in the counting-house;) rear their children; provide for them in old age; and at the same time should make a handsome allowance for a chaplain *, to attend to the instruction, and superintend the religious duties of the joint family.

§ 10. It is easy to foresee the consequences of such an arrangement: that one

* It having been suggested to the author, that this expression may be thought to convey an assertion, that the clergy are stipendiaries of the land-owners; he thinks it right to disclaim even the most distant idea of making any such representation of the temporal condition of the clergy. The intention of the words in the text, is, simply to state the fact; that in the present state of society in England, the mode of remunerating the clergy bears exclusively upon a part, (and by no means the largest part) of the property of the country.

brother, being freed from many expenses, would soon reap the greater profits; would thereby be encouraged to enter into larger speculations; would employ more apprentices, to be partly supported at his brother's charge; and would in time, by the great facilities given to his business, find it necessary to employ so many, that they would entirely eat out the other brother's substance: who cramped in all his operations, and discouraged from entering into new ones, by the unequal share he was bound to bear in the burthen of those of his brother, would every day grow less equal to sustain it; and must in the end give up his house, and his trade, and throw the family into confusion.

§ 11. But it has been said, that the increase of commerce and manufactures has bestowed so large an additional value upon land, as to counterbalance to its proprietors any burthen that may have attended such advantages. To which it is answered, that the additional value will, upon inquiry, be found to be more nominal than real. That though true it is, rents are raised, it is no less so, that the price of every article of life is raised in a greater proportion; that the owner of a cer-

tain quantity of land cannot now command so many of the conveniences of life, as he could fifty years ago. He is therefore a *poorer man*; and not so capable of sustaining an unequal share of any burthen on the community: and in consequence of the superior advantages of manufacturing, and commercial proprietors, the land-owner has entirely lost his situation in the scale of society; so much so, that the country gentleman of small fortune living on an old family estate, is a being, that has almost disappeared from the face of England.

§ 12. It is not meant to assert, that as far as these circumstances are produced by the superior industry, and activity of those engaged in mercantile speculations, exercised in fair competition, they are to be lamented, or are injurious to the country: but that, as far as they are the effect of laws or institutions, tending to take money exclusively out of the pocket of the land-owner, to create and support a population, called for by the demand, and exclusively used for mercantile and manufacturing purposes; which can be increased *ad libitum* by those engaged in the latter pursuits, without any consent on the part of the former; their injustice is their

least objection: for their *ultimate tendency* must be to discourage all employment of capital upon land.

§ 13. The mistaken supposition, that every increase of commerce, and manufactures, will create a proportionate augmentation in the value of land, and its produce, seems to have originated from the theory of some political economists; that land being the primary source, from which every purchasable article proceeds; and an absolute necessity existing, that every person shall buy a certain quantity of its produce; all taxes or burthens laid upon land must be ultimately paid by the consumer. That it is therefore impossible to burthen the land unequally, because every tax laid upon it will be paid by the community in general, in the price of their provisions.

§ 14. But there is an evident want of coincidence between this theory and actual practice; in England at least. It would be very just, provided the supply of the market was preserved in the hands of the native cultivators only, and left entirely to the free competition among them, by preventing the community from purchasing any thing but English produce. But when the general

interests command, that the importation of foreign corn should be permitted, at a moderate price fixed by the legislature; the remuneration of the English farmer, whose expenses are great, is in some measure reduced towards the level of that of the Polish, or American farmer, whose expenses are comparatively small; and the former is completely precluded from raising the price of his produce sufficiently, to repay any additional expense he is obliged to incur: he becomes in fact a dealer in the only article on which, in this free country, it has been found necessary to fix a maximum.

§ 15. If that maximum had not prevented the grower of corn from raising his profits to an equality with those of the merchant, and manufacturer; the price of grain would not only have risen in proportion with that of other articles of consumption; but just so much higher, as would be necessary to replace the extraordinary outgoings of the augmented poor's rates: instead of which, we find the price of grain, not even to have kept pace with the price* of other necessaries.

* The price in years of scarcity must not of course be taken into the account; as the reduced quantity raised, (though sold at a higher price,) often makes a smaller return to the

It is evident therefore, that any additional burthen laid upon the land has not been compensated in the augmented price of its produce: but that the price of one principal part of that produce, has been continually bearing a smaller, and smaller proportion, to the increased outgoings produced by such burthen.

§ 16. If this has been the case in times past, the causes producing it are likely to act still more forcibly in those that are to come; and cry aloud for removal, before their effects produce more serious mischiefs. Supposing that part of the sums, at present levied under the Poor Laws, and solely applied to the relief of the poor, to be equal to a rate of two shillings in the pound on the rack rent*;

mass of cultivators, than the larger quantity sold at a moderate price. Or if the want of a supply from abroad, to make up the deficiency at home, should raise the price of the reduced produce, high enough to give a larger profit to the mass of cultivators, than the average price of an average crop would bestow; still the encouragement thereby given to agriculture should never be used as a fair ground of argument; because the political evils, introduced by deficient crops, should induce us to make every possible exertion to prevent their recurrence.

* Of the 4,200,000*l.* and upwards raised by the poor's rates, nearly 200,000*l.* is spent in law-suits, and removals; that part of the sum is therefore omitted in the estimate of the money *solely applied* to the relief of the poor.

and that the improvement, and increase in the cultivation of the soil, and in commerce and manufactures, should proceed for some years in the same ratio of proportional increase one with another, as they have done for some years past: the latter will have doubled before the former has increased a tenth part *. The additional charge, brought upon the poor's rates by each, will bear nearly the same proportion it has hitherto borne: yet that weaker part of the community, which has only increased its ability to pay in the proportion of one to ten, will have to bear not only the charge incurred by its own comparatively small advantages; but likewise that of the more capable, and principally benefited party: who, though its ability to pay has increased in a proportion nine times as great, will, under the present mode of making the poor's rates, be almost wholly exempt.

§ 17. Consequently the charge upon rateable property, on account of the poor alone, will have increased from the present rate of

* This estimate is formed partly on the additional number of acres brought into cultivation; and partly on the increased profits produced by improvements on those already cultivated; but in both cases the *real value* of the increased produce has been used as the ground of the estimate.

two shillings in the pound on the rack rent, to a larger sum; and will go on further increasing, in proportion with the otherwise general prosperity of the community*.

§ 18. To explain this by figures: Mr. Rose, in his small but useful pamphlet on the Poor Laws, estimates the total of the rental, and profits of the property rated for relief of the poor, at 38,000,000*l.*: 34 millions of which are stated, (on the authority of accounts in the Tax-office,) to be the rental of land alone; and four millions to arise from other rateable property. This latter sum appears too small, if we consider the various cases, in which personal property has, by late decisions, been determined to be liable to the rates. It may perhaps be fairly increased to six millions: which would make the total of actual income rateable for relief of the poor, forty millions. The proportion of that part of the charge, applicable to the *relief* of the poor only, to this sum, is (as above stated) two shillings in the pound.

* The difference between this rate of 2*s.* in the pound on the rack rental, and that of 4*s.* 6*d.* stated in the returns before Parliament, of the year 1802, will be accounted for in a future section. The latter is the rate on the *assessed rental.*

§ 19. Now the whole of the annual income of England, or in other words the whole amount of the profits of its land, and labour, of a description to pay taxes, was estimated nine years ago, and as it appears not inaccurately, at 125 millions. From the increase in all kinds of property since, it may now be fairly stated at 140 millions*; eighty millions of which arise from commerce, manufactures, professions, or the funds; and the other sixty millions from mines, timber, land, houses, &c. Supposing then, that the relative prosperity of commerce, manufactures, and agriculture, should proceed, according to their present proportions of increase, for the next twenty years; the profits on the two former will have risen to 160 millions, (of the present value of money,) while those of the latter will have increased only to sixty-six millions; and the part of

* The author has good authority for asserting, that the tax of ten *per cent.* on the profits of property, will produce in 1806 eleven millions; the income therefore brought under contribution must have been £110,000,000. But if we consider the quantity of property exempt from this tax, (which could make no just claim to such indulgence in the case of Poor's Rates,) and the evasions which may still be supposed to take place—the calculation of 140 millions, as the total amount of the profits of the community, will appear rather below than above the truth.

them rateable for relief of the poor, to forty-four millions only. Yet will these forty-four millions be legally bound to sustain not only the additional charge, thrown on the rates, by the people employed in producing its own four millions additional profit; but likewise by those employed in producing the additional eighty-two millions of the other employments. So that it is calculating moderately, to suppose the average in the pound, on the property paying poor's rates, will have increased nearly one half or to 3*s.*; that in twenty years more it may have risen to 4*s.* 6*d.*; in another term to 6*s.* 9*d.*; again to 10*s.*; and so on till the whole profits from rateable property are annihilated; could it be supposed possible that the country should so long continue blind to the consequences.

§ 20. What renders this prospect for the land still more distressing, is the conviction, that, if the burthen were fairly distributed throughout the community, according to their several profits; the average rate in the pound, instead of having increased, and being likely to do so still more, in the growing ratio we have seen, would have gradually decreased to about seven-pence in the pound: at which rate it would now stand, as has been

advanced in a former chapter, and in all probability would never in future exceed that average. This reasoning will, it is hoped, be found fully illustrated in the annexed table.

A TABLE, shewing the different Effects of a general, and partial Taxation of Profits, for the Relief of the Poor.

	Present Profits.	Supposed Profits in 20 Years.
	£	£
Tenants' and landlords' profits on land, houses, mines, timber, and other real property	60,000,000	66,000,000
Commerce, manufactures, and interest on funds, &c.	80,000,000	160,000,000
	140,000,000	226,000,000

Charge of poor created by a certain quantity of labour, producing a profit of 140,000,000*l.*	4,000,000
Proportionate charge by a quantity of labour producing a profit of 226,000,000*l.*	6,500,000

Average rate in the pound on 40,000,000*l.* the property now rated to discharge 4,000,000*l.**	£. s. d. 0 2 0
Average rate on 44,000,000*l.* the supposed property to be rated to discharge the increased tax of 6,500,000*l.*	near 0 3 0
Average rate in the pound on 140,000,000*l.* to discharge the present tax of 4,000,000*l.*	about 0 0 7
Rate in the pound on 226,000,000*l.* to discharge the supposed increased tax of 6,500,000*l.*	about 0 0 7

* The million for highways is not here reckoned, for reasons before given: and 200,000*l.* of the 4,200,000*l.* is omitted, being spent in lawsuits, &c.; it is a charge levied however, and would raise the present rate in the pound about two-pence.

§ 21. It appears therefore that the increase of commerce and manufactures, which (except in its effects here noticed upon land) is devoutly to be wished; and unless the arguments in the early part of this Inquiry are unfounded, is in some sort necessary to our existence, under the present circumstances; might, at the trifling charge of seven-pence in the pound on their clear profits, continue upon a solid foundation, with all their extraordinary demands for men supplied. And this would be brought about without such an interference with agriculture, as cannot but check, and endanger the general prosperity. For though the absolute sum raised, in spite of any thing human power can do to prevent it, must increase in proportion with the population, and the augmented riches of the country; yet it is clear, that the ability to pay would have increased equally: therefore the average rate in the pound would have continued the same; without reference to improvement in the laws, by which indeed it might be much reduced. The smallness of this rate will likewise preclude the necessity of obviating a reflection which has no doubt before this occurred to the reader; viz. that the recom-

mendation to charge the trading part of the community with their share of the poor's rate, would operate as a discouragement to commerce, and is contradictory to the policy of encouraging it, enforced in the last chapter, and in the former parts of this Inquiry.

§ 22. In the one case, the burthen would be light on the community, and by general attention, (which would not be less likely to be bestowed, if all were equally interested,) might always be kept at a low average, and never become a serious evil. Whereas in the other, the improvement of that part of the public property, which is allowed on all hands to be absolutely essential to the general welfare, is not only impeded, but must be gradually diminished, and in the end entirely stopped.

§ 23. To this reasoning may be objected, the detail given in a former chapter of the great increase in the number of enclosures, and in the capital laid out upon land. It must be allowed with gratitude, and admiration, that the predilection of the English for landed property, (arising from its superior durability, and the advantages of personal

influence,) has induced them to forego the higher profits to be had from other sources of industry, in a degree greater than could be expected: that it does at present outweigh, in the estimation of many, the difference between a return of from three to five *per cent.* on their capital, and one of from six to fifteen *per cent.* But this is the gratification of a propensity, not the permanent effect flowing from interest: the more expensive therefore that gratification becomes, the fewer will of course indulge in it *. When profit from land sinks as low as from 2½ to 4½ *per cent.* on the capital employed †; fewer will engage in bringing it into cultivation: whereas could the alteration of any laws

* The gradual increase of late years in the average importation of wheat seems to justify this observation; Mr. Young in his Annals of Agriculture states—The annual average importation of wheat,

		Quarters
From 1785 to 1790	to have been	107,000
From 1790 to 1795	——	298,000
From 1795 to 1800	——	617,000
From 1800 to 1803	——	827,000

Years of scarcity however intervened in the latter periods.

† The present profit on capital laid out on land, is estimated at from three to five *per cent.*, according to the labour bestowed.

raise it as high as from 3½ to 5½ or 6 *per cent.*; a proportionate addition would be made to the capital so employed: although it is much to be feared, that no law, in the present state of things, would be able, without injury to the public, completely to equalize its profits with those of commerce and manufactures. The constant and gradual augmentation in the quantity of corn imported shews, that, notwithstanding the absolute increase of cultivation, the growth of corn still bears a gradually decreasing relative proportion to the increase of commerce, and manufactures; and the foregoing reasons may serve to prove, that without equalizing as far as possible the burthens upon each species of property, that proportion must every year become smaller.

§ 24. There is another consideration, to which a reference is reluctantly made; but its close connexion with this important subject renders it impossible to pass it over in silence, without unfairly compromising the merits of the question under discussion: for if it be unreasonable, and impolitic, to tax one half of a country for the support of the whole, supposing them originally on an equal footing; it becomes doubly so, should it

appear, that that half is already exclusively loaded with another charge, operating very considerably in checking all improvement in the peculiar line of its employment.

§ 25. The tithes due to the clergy, and lay impropriators, are such a charge; and much unmerited reproach has been cast upon the former most respectable order of men on that account.

§ 26. The clergy of England are a powerful body; and like all other public bodies are *collectively* tenacious of their rights, and privileges: indeed the consideration, that they are trustees for successors totally unconnected with them by natural ties, may fairly induce them to think themselves bound in honour, and conscience, to hand down those rights unimpaired. In the exercise of them however, they are *individually* liberal, not to say generous. It may safely be averred that the full value of the tithe is not taken in one living out of twenty. But it is the extent of the right itself, and not the lenient manner in which those, who have the power, think proper to exercise it, which is the fair subject of inquiry. It is the demand authorized by

law, which is sometimes seen to be exacted to the full extent by lessees of tithes, that must be considered as an outgoing, in all calculations made, previous to laying out capital on the improvement of land.

§ 27. For the real extent of this outgoing we may refer to a member of the church *, who proves himself, to have been extremely assiduous in the management of an "*extensive tithe concern;*" and who has written a treatise upon the subject, for the purpose, as he says, of placing the proprietor of the tenth part of the landed property of England, on a footing, in respect of worldly wisdom, with the owner of the other nine parts. In this treatise, after much minute detail of the relative value of all sorts of crops, he sums up the whole by stating, that any sum, not *exceeding one third of the rent*, may be considered as a reasonable composition, in lieu of all tithes arising on a farm; a conclusion,

* The Reverend James Bearblock; who has written a Treatise on Tithes, which has already reached a second edition, dedicated to the Bishop of Lincoln: to which is prefixed an advertisement, indirectly informing the public, that the *reverend* author *is willing to value any one's tithes for a fair remuneration.*

which, if the value of landed property is to be estimated by its clear profits, does most certainly establish the claim of the tithe proprietor, not to a tenth only, but to a fifth at least of the landed property of England *.

§ 28. The consequent discouragement to the employment of fresh capital, upon the improvement of land, will operate in the following manner. Supposing, without the charge of tithes, that the profits arising from land were equal to those made in trade, which (poor's rates out of the question) would still be above the fact; a prudent man, having capital to lay out, would reason thus: If I mean to lay out my capital only, and reserve my labour to myself, as I shall do by buying into the funds, I must, for the sake of becoming a landed proprietor, give up on account of tithes a fourth † of the profits, that might

* The landlord's clear profits are not equal to more than three fourths of the rent, and supposing the tenant's profits to be rather more, the assertion made in the text is justified. It is indeed partly corroborated by the allotment of the fifth of the arable lands, and a smaller proportion of the pastures, sometimes made in lieu of tithes, upon the enclosure of waste lands.

† The third of the actual rent is of course equal to a fourth of what the rent would be, if that third were not paid as tithe.

be had in the funds. If I mean to bestow my labour as well as my capital, as I shall do by entering into commerce, or manufactures, a sixth of my profits must on the same account be sacrificed for the sake of becoming a farmer on my own land. It is needless to expatiate on the effects which such difference of inducements must have on the choice of the capitalist.

§ 29. It is but justice to add, that this discouraging statement applies only to the enclosure of wastes, and improvements upon lands already cultivated; because in other cases, the tithe is calculated upon as an outgoing between the buyer and seller, and is considered in the purchase-money. In a political point of view however, this does not diminish the force of the reasoning in the foregoing section; because it is from the adoption of enclosures and improvements only, that the supply of food can be raised up to the demand. It is of very little importance to the nation, whether the usual routine of agriculture, on the lands already cultivated, be carried on by the capital of A or of B: but it is of the highest importance that no impediment should exist in the application of *fresh capital* to the cultivation

of the soil. It was thought necessary to remark the foregoing distinction, because the collision of opposite interests, upon minds too illiberal to see the subject in an enlarged point of view, has unfortunately introduced, in many instances, a very unnecessary degree of exaggeration, and acrimony into its discussion. The landholder has often accused the tithe-owner of injustice and rapacity, when he only wished to claim his just rights; and the latter has made the same accusation against the former, when he has only wished to render the enjoyment of those rights compatible with the general prosperity of the country. Whereas, if the mist cast before the eyes of both by self-interest could be cleared away; they would find their true interests to be the same. That the land-owner is as much concerned in the security of a liberal, and decent maintenance for the national clergy; as the tithe-owner is, that such maintenance should not interfere with the necessary pursuits of the rest of the people. In all events a free discussion of the subject is desirable: he that would wish to cast a veil over it, acts the same part with that easy man, who, when his friend turned up his carpet, and shewed him symptoms of an

extensive dry-rot, covered up the mischief to save present trouble, and was afterwards extremely surprised to find his house falling about his ears.

§ 30. Tithes likewise cannot be denied to act as a premium upon grazing, in preference to raising corn; an effect much to be regretted in the present state of the supply of the corn market. The manner in which they produce this effect has been too much discussed, to need repetition here. It is sufficient to know, that though the gross profits of the farmer, and the advantages to the nation, may be greater from the growth of corn, than from grazing; yet in consequence of the tithe, the nett profits of the farmer will be considerably greater from the latter practice.

§ 31. With these facts and their consequences before his eyes; which it would be folly to deny, and pernicious to conceal; what friend to his country would refuse any exertion, to relieve the shoulders of the land from the unequal pressure of the poor's rates, which *certainly might* be more fairly distributed; when he sees it so heavily burthened with another charge, which he would

hesitate in consenting to tamper with; unless a more eligible system of commutation than has yet been pointed out can be discovered. For however he may regret the inconveniences it cannot be denied to produce; he will easily foresee others more alarming, from any attempt to place the clergy, as a body, in a lower situation in the scale of property, and consequently of society, than they stand at present. The public in general are equally interested with the clergy, in resisting any measure that would have a tendency, either to prevent the revenues of the church from increasing in proportion with those of the country in general; or to render the receipt of those revenues less immediate, or secure from accidents; which a commutation for land or funded property would certainly do. And although it is impossible to assent entirely to the position of the reverend gentleman before alluded to, as to the perfect equality of the tenure of the tithe proprietor, with that of the owner of the other nine parts of the land: (since an inquiry into the nature and origin of tithes will convince us, that they are rather a fiduciary deposit, for the due returns of which, in service to be performed, the clergy are bound to

the public, as well as to their own consciences; while the landed proprietor is answerable, on account of *his* property, to God alone:) yet nevertheless, every liberal mind would feel a great reluctance to entertain any proposition whatever, tending to alter the state of church property, without the full consent of the clergy themselves to its adoption. Though one may freely be allowed to breathe a wish, that the remuneration of their labours were more equally distributed among that order of them, whose rank and duties are the same; and upon whose personal, and pecuniary benevolence an equal call is made*: That a more adequate provision could be made for those, who perform the clerical duties upon lay impropriations; and particularly that means could be found to increase the number of ministers of the established church, in proportion to that of the population; in parishes where manufactures or other causes have augmented the number of souls, to a degree, that the cure of them is utterly out of the power of the most diligent and active incumbent. There appears little reason to doubt, that the great increase of Dissenters, particularly remarkable in the trading, and manufacturing parts

* The parochial clergymen.

of the country, is to be attributed principally to the absolute impossibility, which many have experienced, of procuring religious advice and instruction from ministers of the established church; and of attending public worship with convenience to themselves: and this notwithstanding the best endeavours of those ministers. Many parishes could be pointed out, where a century or two ago, one person was fully sufficient to perform the clerical duties in an enlarged sense, which ten would scarcely now be able to discharge. Yet little care has been taken to provide for this alteration: and the same provision of labour, which was formerly thought requisite for the cure of three or four hundred souls, is in some cases all which is now afforded for that of twice as many thousands. Much more might be said upon this subject: and it is really lamentable, that a friend to his country is reduced to the necessity of rejoicing as a Christian, in the increase of sectaries and dissenters; (since the religious principles they inculcate are better than none at all;) while, as a well-wisher to the church establishment, he cannot but seriously lament the necessary existence of such formidable rivals to its welfare.

§ 32. To return. Having now, it is hoped, established the expediency, if not the absolute necessity, of an equal distribution of the charge, created by the Poor Laws, among all persons of property; let us next inquire, to what extent the letter of the law, and the various interpretations of it, have countenanced such a distribution: and how far actual practice coincides with the decisions laid down upon the subject.

§ 33. The section in the 43d Eliz. directing money to be raised by rates for the relief of the poor, which is that, upon the authority of which the money is still levied, is (like many other acts of Parliament) worded with an ambiguity extremely convenient to the profession of the law. It begins by directing the taxation of every inhabitant; and then proceeds to enumerate them under their several descriptions; leaving out many species of proprietors which probably existed then, and which certainly are very common now. So that an uncertainty was thrown upon the intentions of the Legislature, and upon the liability of some classes of property to be rated, which has been a very fruitful source of litigation.

§ 34. It appears however, upon the whole, from the various cases which have been determined, that the idea of the justice of taxing personal property, and indeed profits of all kinds, is of considerable standing. But the courts of law, "*from the difficulties attending the matter in practice,*" have refused, for the most part, to lay down any general opinion on the subject; but have determined every case upon its particular merits; in which the custom of the several places has much swayed them. So that at present, some kinds of stock in trade are rated, some not; some sorts of profits are rated, others not.

§ 35. In the year 1777, it was laid down from the bench, that to make personal estate rateable, it must be *local, visible property, within the parish:* a decision which, as may be supposed, increased the number of law-suits not a little; since thereby not only the personality of property became the subject of dispute, but also its *locality*, and *visibility;* and on the existence, or non-existence of these three qualities, many cases have been determined with various results. A decision afterwards took place in 1783, that in the case of a weighing engine *the clear profits*

resulting from it are undoubtedly rateable: and in 1787, that a house, containing a machine, should not be rated according to the mere value of the house, but of that and the machine together. At length in 1789, Lord Kenyon expressly laid it down, that the Legislature intended, when rates are made, that every person should contribute, according to the benefit which he receives in the parish; and that it is carrying the rule of exemption too far to say, that only property which is *visible* shall be rated: other decisions of a similar tendency have since been made.

§ 36. From these several decisions, there seems, upon the whole, little reason to doubt, that the general opinion has at length become strongly in favour of the propriety, fairness, and expediency of rating all sorts of profits, as far as they can be ascertained. In truth, it seems impossible to imagine any species of profits, the amount of which does not depend sufficiently upon the general labour and prosperity of the community, to make it fair, that they should bear their reasonable proportion, in all charges for keeping up the public stock of labour, and for the promotion of the public prosperity; and consequently in the

payment of the poor's rate, which is one of those charges. The profits arising from the skill of individuals in the liberal professions seem, at first sight, to come least under this description; but a little reflection will soon convince us, that the profits of a lawyer, a surgeon, or an architect, must always bear a proportion to the riches, and population of the country, in which he practises, and therefore to its supply of labour. He lays out his capital in his education, and support, before he begins to practise; and the profits he afterwards reaps, like those of the farmer, or the merchant, pay him the interest of the capital laid out, with the reward of his labour superadded.

§ 37. With respect to rating money in the funds, there is no doubt, that the interest paid on the public debt is most emphatically the produce of the land, and labour of the community; and that the public creditor is in fact more interested in the objects promoted by the Poor Laws, than almost any other species of proprietor. But it may be said that a rate upon the funds would impose upon the stockholder the necessity of paying twice to the poor's rate; an objection which

will be noticed in the observations immediately following, upon the method of rating the rent of land.

§ 38. It has been laid down in the law books, that the farmer, or occupier of land must be always taxed to the poor's rates, and not the landlord, for this reason; that if the latter were taxed for his rents, he would pay twice: that the poor's rate therefore is not a charge *upon the land*, but upon the occupier *in respect of the land*. As far as this reasoning is intelligible, it seems to be a distinction without a difference. The poor's rates, as well as other outgoings, are always considered in the rent; and whether it be tacitly deducted from that, and paid by the farmer; or added to it, and openly paid by the landlord; appears to make no more difference as to its being an actual charge upon the land, and the rent of the owner; than the payment of the property tax at the Bank can be contended not to be a charge, (allowable against the full amount of the interest of stock,) in the settlement of a banker's account, with the individual whose dividends he receives. If all clear profits however were rated, those of the tenant, as

well as the landlord, should be included; since they both together form the aggregate profit of the capital, and the labour laid out upon the land: the rent, which is often an uncertain criterion of the real profits derived to the owner, and cultivator of land, and sometimes indeed exceeds those profits, would be entirely left out of the question *.

§ 39. The expression above alluded to, that the landlord *would pay twice*, seems indeed to admit the rates to be an actual charge upon the land. If however, it be said, that he pays a rate on the money received for rent, and likewise on any objects, rateable to the poor, which he may choose to enjoy, and pay for with that money, the assertion is certainly true; and would apply equally to the interest on stock in the funds, to the profits of a profession, and to all other kinds of profits; which, if made rateable, a man might, or might not spend, according to his inclination, upon other objects rateable to the poor: but rating the clear profits, after all deductions, would

* Where poor's rates are high, repairs heavy, and crops scanty, the rent will sometimes exceed the united profits of the landlord and tenant.

obviate this objection. There is a further difference, that should be noticed, between paying a per centage upon clear profits generally, and a rate made upon the interest of capital in the funds, or the rent of land; that in the former case, the payment is always made according to the ability of the payer; in the latter it may be quite otherwise: for the land taxed may be principally mortgaged, and the stock may be in the hands of trustees, to pay off a certain sum of charge upon it; in which case, the proprietors are taxed much beyond their fair proportion of ability.

§ 40. It should seem then upon the whole, that a tax upon the clear profits of every individual throughout the nation, whether arising from capital, from labour, or from both, would be the fairest, as well as the most politic method of providing for the relief of the poor: always taking care, that, except the rate upon profits from the funds, (which should be at the disposal of Parliament, for the benefit of the poor,) the profits should, as nearly as possible, be considered to accrue, (and the rate be paid,) in the district where they are acquired.

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§ 41. That these conclusions have not escaped the penetration of the many well-informed and patriotic men, who have turned their thoughts to the subject, may easily be supposed. To what then are we to attribute the small proportion of property, and that so unequally taxed, which has hitherto borne the whole burthen of the poor's rates? As far as relates to mercantile, and manufacturing profits, partly perhaps to the difficulty of ascertaining their real amount; and partly to the reluctance felt by many of those, now charged to the rate upon land, on an estimate below the real amount of the rental *, to promote an inquiry into that amount; which would probably be the consequence of the feeling excited in the proprietors of any new species of profits, upon finding it charged with an outgoing, they had flattered themselves with the hope of escaping.

§ 42. With respect to the first of the causes here assigned, it is evident that the direct taxes on income, and property, im-

* Though there is every reason to suppose that the rate in the pound, on the real rental, does not amount to more than 2*s.* the returns of 1803 state an average of 4*s.* 6*d.* on the rental, according to the estimate at which it is actually rated.

posed of late years, have thrown great light upon the general amount of the profits of the country; have introduced much facility * in collecting a tax upon them; and (prejudice apart) have proved to be more advantageous both to the payer, and receiver, than almost any other kind of imposition. A larger proportion of the money paid by the people goes into the Exchequer; for the charges of management are little or nothing, compared with the amount of the tax. Were it possible, or in other respects desirable, to commute the customs, excise, stamps, and other indirect taxes †, for an addition to this tax; the public would be relieved from the charge of above a million a year, paid to officers for managing those duties, over and above what would be necessary in the collection of the same sums from the tax on property. The lawsuits, vexations, inconvenience to trade, and sometimes oppression, unavoidable in the

* Notwithstanding these facilities however, there is every reason to believe, that *trade* does not yet pay its quota.

† There is no intention here, to advise any commutation of taxes on consumption, for direct taxes; which would be pernicious in many respects; but merely to illustrate the great saving, that exists in the *collection* of the latter. The tax upon salt is perhaps the only indirect tax, which could be commuted with advantage to the public.

detailed execution of other taxes, if fairly balanced against the inconveniences of this, (the chief of which seems to be in some measure ideal, viz. that of imparting to Government the true amount of each person's income,) may perhaps be found to weigh down the scale.

§ 43. That the sums for the relief of the poor should be levied by the same means, the author does not presume positively to advise. Should the principle of an equal rate be admitted to be just; it is for the collective wisdom of the nation, not for an humble individual, to determine upon the means: their decision would probably be influenced, by the opinion they may entertain of the importance of the poor's tax itself, and of the absolute necessity of its equal distribution through the whole community. But every man may rest assured of this, that no great objects are to be attained without a proportionate sacrifice; and where that of pride, and prejudice, is alone sufficient to secure them, he is peculiarly fortunate; since he may be accounted a gainer on both sides of the transaction; both in what he parts with, and what he receives in return.

§ 44. With respect to the second cause above alluded to, it arises from a narrow and partial view of the parties concerned, as to their real interests: for what can be more narrow than not to perceive, that when a certain sum is to be paid, it matters not, whether it be raised by a rate of four shillings in the pound, on fifty pounds; or of two shillings on one hundred pounds? And what can be more partial, than for the sake of the ideal advantage of the former mode of payment, to forego the real one of obliging others to lighten the burthen, by contributing their proper share? If the whole property in a parish were fairly rated, a landholder, who now pays four shillings in the pound, on a rate in which his farm is estimated at half its value, (say fifty pounds,) would often not pay more than a shilling in the pound, (perhaps only seven-pence,) on his whole rent of one hundred pounds; and thus be a gainer of one half or more, which would be paid by the personal proprietor.

§ 45. The only plausible argument against taxing all profits equally in support of the poor, seems to be; that by spreading the burthen over so large a surface, it may become

so light upon each particular spot, that individuals may grow careless; and neglect, as they have heretofore done, to take measures of prevention, till the evil by its magnitude shall again force itself into notice, in a manner that leaves no alternative between remedy and ruin.

§ 46. In answer to this, it may in the first place be observed, that the eyes of all those who have considered the subject, (and let us hope the same will soon be the case with the whole country,) are so completely opened to the present inconveniences attending the execution of the Poor Laws, that sufficient vigilance will most probably be exerted in future: especially if we consider, that every individual of property, instead of only a small part of them, will be interested in preventing abuses; and must of necessity, in all speculations, have an eye to their probable future consequences on the situation of the poor, and the expense of maintaining them. This general interest of the whole community in one object cannot be too highly prized.

§ 47. In the next place, it does not appear a very fair objection to laws acknowledged

to be calculated for remedying an evil, that calls loudly for reformation, to assert, that they will not be executed when enacted: that laziness, and carelessness are so deeply rooted in the disposition of all ranks of the people, that only the strong conviction of immediate, and instant peril can rouse them to exertion. If this be so, there is an end of all precautionary remedy for any abuse; and statesmen, whose office it is, to foresee public calamities, and counteract them in their infancy, may save themselves the trouble and anxiety of forecast, and leave the people to be instructed by the dear-bought lessons of experience only. But such is not our necessity: when the English people have a confidence in the wisdom and integrity of their government, they are always ready to second its exertions, and those of the magistrates in the execution of the laws. But if they find the government negligent; if they hear that the House of Commons is but thinly attended, on the days appointed for debating, and voting on the subject of the Poor Laws; they may surely be excused in supposing, that if those, to whom they look up as the depositaries of the political wisdom of the country, think the question

of so little importance; it would be both absurd, and useless in such as are only vested with inferior means, to give themselves any further trouble upon the subject. That many have thought this, and that the pressure of experience has now opened their eyes to the contrary, will scarcely be denied.

§ 48. Nevertheless, if a law can be so framed, as to carry within itself an essential principle to secure it against being abused; a great object is certainly gained: and it will be much better to trust to such a provision, than to the vigilance, and activity of any government, any magistrates, or any other persons. Let us see then, how far such a principle might be made an essential part of any improvement in the distribution of the rates.

§ 49. If there be any truth in what has been before advanced, either as to the policy, or the fact of the continually increasing population of England, it appears impossible to devise a more impolitic, or inhuman proposal, than that of fixing *the amount* of the poor's rates to *any absolute sum*, on no account to be exceeded. The actual existence

of the rates would be holding out encouragement to that redundancy of population, which the increasing demand for labour shews to be advantageous to the state; while their confined amount would soon, (as the numbers increased,) become so unequal to provide for the additional charge thrown upon them, by the usual proportion of paupers from the increased population; that, as the author of the Essay on Population well observes, "we should add to the cruelty of starving them, the extreme injustice of professing to relieve them:" and we should moreover soon put a stop to national prosperity, by stopping the supply of people, and introducing misery, indigence, and weakness among the lower orders of the people.

§ 50. But if the poor's rates were once fairly levied upon the general profits of the aggregate of land and labour; it does not appear that any of these objections would apply, to fixing them at *a certain average rate in the pound sterling*, on no account to be exceeded *. We have seen, that the

* This expression, "on no account to be exceeded," must of course be received with this allowance; that it

amount of the rates has in no period kept pace with the ability of the country to pay them; and from the great improvement in the art of constructing machinery, we have reason to hope this disproportion will be still more favourable: particularly if any success has attended the attempt, which has been made to shew, that by prudent management, and economical regulations, the average now spent in the mere relief of necessity, might be still further reduced; and the savings converted to the preventive purposes of moral, and religious instruction.

§ 51. In proportion to the fairness with which the rate was made, would the sum levied always keep pace with the actual demand for relief: every million added to the national profits by trade or agriculture, would bring, along with its portion of charge upon the rates, its portion likewise of money for the payment. So that the general prosperity

would still be in the power of Parliament to alter the rate, should satisfactory evidence be laid before it that the existing average is not sufficient; this evidence however could never be produced, unless the prosperity of the country, instead of increasing as it has done, should decrease and decay; in which case an entirely different system should be adopted with respect to the poor.

might go on increasing to the utmost verge of possibility, and the population, and charge upon the rates might be augmented with it; yet the average rate in the pound would still continue the same, though the actual sum levied would increase, and be equal to every demand. The charge of twenty millions of people might as easily be supported by a rate of seven pence in the pound, as that of ten millions. And, if we consider what has been before advanced, as to the present actual average in the pound of the poor's rate, upon the whole profits of the kingdom; it seems by no means chimerical to entertain an expectation, that so much of those profits might be brought under contribution to the rates; that if nine pence in the pound were finally fixed upon, as the average not to be surpassed, but which might be reduced according to circumstances; the poor might not only be as well provided for; but a great saving would in a few years accrue. This might be held at the disposal of Parliament, by an annual account, and exposition regularly laid before them; and the sum expended on schools, cottages with land, or in any manner for the benefit of the poor, that might be thought calculated to augment their true

comforts, and diminish the average number of the chargeable.

§ 52. Should it be found at any time, that the sum raised upon this plan, was insufficient for the purpose of supporting the poor in times of ordinary plenty; there would be every reason to suppose, either that the demand for labour was diminishing, a circumstance which might easily be ascertained by other means; or that the profits of property were not fairly rated; but that an increase had taken place in them, which had been overlooked. The conduct to be adopted therefore would be, not as at present to lay a still heavier charge on those already rated, but to search for such, as had unfairly avoided contributing their proper share *.

§ 53. This further advantage would arise from such a limitation: that though it could never interfere with the production of people, and their support, in any proportion, which experience has shewn it possible that a demand for their labour should exist; yet it would act as a kind of political barometer,

* If these are not to be found, application should be made to Parliament to enlarge the average rate.

giving timely notice of any approach towards a decline in the growing prosperity of the country; which would be a signal to the Government to set about adopting means congenial to its altered situation. It would no doubt give this notice by introducing a degree of distress among the poor: but the distress would not arise from the laws, but from the altered circumstances of the country, with which the existence of the Poor Laws has no concern: it must take place in every society sinking from prosperity, and losing its usual resources of industry; as has been exemplified in the case of Spain cited in the early part of this Inquiry. For as the resources of labour in a country do not, except in the case of conquest, cease all at once; but by a gradual depression of circumstances, introducing a change of habits, manners, and modes of employment; it follows that it must be the work of some generations: and the greater or less degree of population, when it first enters upon this calamitous career, will not accelerate its descent at all. Nor will a larger proportion of the people be affected by it; though certainly more individuals, than if the country were thinly peopled; which is tantamount to

saying it had never risen to any height of prosperity *. A contagious disease will carry off more lives in a large family, than in a small one; but that does not appear a good reason against enjoying, as far as possible, the comforts arising from such a family. The inflictions of Providence, either on families or nations, must be borne with patience, with all their concomitant evils; we must not despise or reject its benefits, through a fear that they may be followed by a reverse: but we may reasonably take every precaution to warn us of its approach; that if it should arrive, we may have the consolation of reflecting upon the small share our own laziness and apathy had in its production.

§ 54. The great difficulty, in the limitation of the poor's rate to a certain average rate in the pound, would arise from a contemplation of the condition of the poor in times of scarcity, when a larger sum would no doubt be necessary. An attempt has already been made to shew, that measures,

* According to the system of society, which has existed in Europe for some centuries; it seems absolutely necessary to the high prosperity of a powerful country, that it should be populous.

which in ordinary times are productive of good effects, should not be rejected, because they do not contain, what no single one possibly can, an inherent principle to counteract extraordinary accidents: but these last should rather be the subject of other, and extraordinary regulations. The calamity above alluded to does not often afflict this country: if the measures recommended for the encouragement of agriculture, and bringing more land into cultivation, by peasants advanced in life, were adopted, there is reason to hope it would occur still less often; and when it did, perhaps the resource, pointed out from the colonies, might go far to counteract its effects in raising the price of corn to a very exorbitant height. But as, notwithstanding all human precautions, the possibility of the recurrence of another scarcity would still exist; it is humbly recommended that in such a case, the deficiency in the supply from the rates, should be made up from the general produce of the other taxes; or of new ones laid on by Parliament for the following year, to continue for that year only *.

* It is well known, that in the late scarcities, the poor's rates in some places exceeded thirty shillings in the pound

§ 55. By these means the regular operation of the rates would not be interfered with: and the evil, by pressing home upon the attention of the Government, and requiring the aid of a specific measure to counteract it, would be more likely to be had in remembrance after the danger was over; than when a resource is known to be at hand, that interferes much less immediately with the operations of Government; though its ultimate effects on the best interests of the people are most pernicious.

§ 56. With respect to the fidelity, with which this parliamentary fund would be applied; it must be considered first, that since it would equally come from the pockets of the people, all would be equally interested in seeing that it was not abused: and secondly, that it would not be difficult to lay down certain rules, drawn from the acknowledged wants of the poor, and the means adopted for supplying them, by which it would be generally known, what portion of relief each individual applying for it, would

on the rack-rent; in many they exceeded 20s. in the pound; a circumstance, which should it often recur, could not fail entirely to annihilate agriculture in those places.

be entitled to: therefore any partiality, or favour would easily be discovered, and could not fail to become public.

§ 57. Finally, if Parliament voted a supply for this specific purpose, it would have a more acknowledged right to regulate the detail of its expenditure. It might enact, what portion of relief should be given in substitutes, what in money: and by framing positive laws upon the subject; which the magistrates would be bound to use every exertion in executing, and the people feel a necessity of submitting to, would produce many advantages. At present, from the dependance of the nature of the relief to be bestowed, on the will of the parish officers, and magistrates, who are constantly within reach of the clamour of those applying *;

* In order to meet sentimental objections, it is proper perhaps to observe, that this interference with the habits, and propensities of the people, and with their perfect freedom of living as they please, is only recommended as a choice of evils, to be exclusively adopted during the temporary pressure of a scarcity; in which situation (as in a town during a siege) every individual is bound to submit, (and it is the duty of the governors to oblige them so to do,) to all private inconvenience, which can be shewn to be for the public good. Undoubtedly the interference should not be

any regulation, which clashes at all with their prejudices, and antipathies, immediately raises such an outcry, accompanied with bewailings of the injury done to them, and of the selfishness of their superiors; that few, if any, within hearing of so much complaint, have firmness to persevere in so unpopular a course; however convinced they may be of its general, and individual utility. Yet if Parliament, maturely deliberating upon the best evidence that could be brought before it, and less likely to be influenced by popular clamour without doors, should enact positive regulations upon the subject; the magistrates would have it in their power to say, (as they are now often obliged to do, when the people are discontented with the operation of the laws,) that they had no discretion; that they were bound only to execute what the wisdom of the Legislature had enacted. The consequence would be, as it has hitherto been on all similar occasions, that the people, feeling a confidence in the collective wisdom, and integrity of

confined to the habits of the poor only, but extend equally to all ranks, and persons; who whether in luxury, or in manufactures, consume that, which, if such use were prohibited, would add to the general stock of provisions.

their representatives, would be convinced of the necessity; would submit to it: and when the struggle was over with their pride and prejudice, and they set about heartily to make the most of the materials of their food; and to interest themselves sincerely in the expedients provided by their superiors in skill, and ingenuity for that purpose; the actual pressure of a scarcity of grain would not only be less felt; but habits of domestic, and culinary economy would be adopted, extending the amelioration of their condition to distant generations. There is every reason to suppose, that the expedients recommended by humane, and adopted by prudent and well-disposed individuals, in the late scarcities, have operated this way to a considerable extent.

§ 58. If the facts contained in this chapter are true, and the arguments drawn from them fairly established, this alternative seems to be the sum of the whole:—Whether it be better, by dividing the burthen of the poor's rates throughout the whole profits of the community, to enable it to proceed increasing in prosperity to the utmost extent of its means, without injury or danger to any par-

ticular part, and through it to the whole; or, by shutting our eyes to the rottenness of the present system, and to the inevitable mischiefs which it is gradually introducing; to suffer one half of the community to go on prospering at the expense of the other, till, by its entire ruin, a mortal blow is given to the general welfare.

CHAPTER IX.

RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUSION.

§ 1. If the object for which this Inquiry was undertaken, be at all attained; some of those, who have attentively perused it, may perhaps be convinced; that in the state in which England, and the rest of Europe have existed since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and most emphatically in the present times; any attempt to improve the state of society, by the introduction of other preventive checks to population, than those which have actually arisen from the state of the demand for labour, would have just so far tended to check its prosperity. If such checks had actually been imposed, to the extent of keeping the population, in all cases, down to the level of the supply of food grown on the soil, we should at this moment probably have been swallowed up by the common enemy, among the second rate powers of Europe; which rank, taking the extent of our territory, and its natural productions *only* into consideration, is the highest to which we could reasonably have aspired.

§ 2. They will likewise perhaps entertain little doubt, that by neglecting, in compliance with such a system of policy, the peculiar means which Nature has bestowed upon us, to place ourselves upon a level with others, who from situation or superior extent of territory, may, with good policy and safety, make agriculture the sole measure, and foundation of their population; we should wantonly have thrown away the sword and buckler suited to our natural strength; and by foolishly attempting to wield the arms of the giant, have presented ourselves in fact an easy prey to his overgrown strength. Whereas by a moderate share of foresight, and alacrity, in availing ourselves of such means as were placed within our reach, and best calculated for our peculiar use, we have not only defended ourselves from all attacks of a superior force, but have raised the energy of our country, to a par with the physical strength of the greatest of our rivals.

§ 3. If such a situation has been in times past, and now is, necessary to our safety; we have little reason to think, that in those about to follow, that necessity will become less imperative. In the arduous contest for exist-

ence, which, though it has already continued twelve years, we may yet be said (comparatively) to be but just entering upon; engaged as we must be with our single strength opposed to that of almost all Europe, directed by consummate skill pointed with inveterate rancour; it is still more important, that a redundant population, and the power which accompanies it, should be cultivated to the utmost. If our inveterate enemy can afford to lose seven men to our one in war, and yet retain a sufficient force for his other purposes, are not we imperatively called upon to use the most strenuous exertions, both in absolutely diminishing as far as possible so great a disparity in numbers; and in providing the most effectual means financial and political, for preventing our solitary *one* from coming into contact with his *seven*? Since the neglect of such precaution would be placing *rather too much reliance* on the vulgar opinion of the *number of foreigners*, for whom *one Englishman is a match*.

§ 4. If a commanding navy be necessary for this purpose, and that is derived from a flourishing commerce; this again from extended manufactures; these from a redundant

population; and this last from the Poor Laws; the deduction which proves those laws to be instrumental to the public safety, though long, is not the less just and indisputable.

§ 5. How few of us do not recollect in our own time many opportunities, in which 20 or 30,000 men, more than could be found for the purposes of war, would have been of the greatest service? and thrown in at a critical period, might have turned the fortune of a war, and saved the country? Those, who have traced the progress of our commerce, and manufactures with diligence, must have had the same cause to regret the necessary renunciation of civil advantages, which have presented themselves for acceptance. If the existence of a redundant population would have prevented these disappointments, how much reason have we now to obviate their recurrence, by giving every assistance to the Poor Laws; which are one great instrument, by which such a population is created?

§ 6. In truth, besides the experience of the benefits arising from the Poor Laws at home in past and present times; we may collect further evidence of their utility, or

rather absolute necessity to the full pursuit of prosperity in other countries, which find a great and increasing demand for their manufactures. The present method of supporting the poor in Scotland is a signal instance of this: in the country villages, where little alteration has taken place in their ancient employments, and habits, they are supported (as in England before the 43d Eliz.) by voluntary contributions at the church: but wherever manufactures have spread themselves to any extent, an assessment very similar to that in England has taken place, because it has been found necessary; and will no doubt be extended over the whole country with the extension of commerce, and manufactures. That the Scotch, an acute nation, remarkable for industry, and economy, should have adopted such a system, with their eyes open to all the accusations of inconvenience, and impolicy, which have been laid to its charge in the neighbouring country; seems a pregnant proof, both of the necessity of some such institution in their actual state of society; and of their conviction, that the operation of the Poor Laws is not *necessarily* attended with those

evils, so often complained of, as arising from their nature, and principles.

§ 7. With respect to the manufacturing parts of Ireland, various opinions have, (it is believed,) existed among the politicians of that country, as to the expediency of establishing a legal provision for the poor. The subject would be too diffuse for discussion in this place: we may safely however venture to assert, that, in point of humanity, a reasonable provision for the old, who have laboured in a country, where a redundant population, (produced by peculiar circumstances of food, and climate,) prevents wages from being high enough, to enable a labourer with a family to make provision for old age, could not but be desirable. But in a political view of encouragement to population, the statesmen of that country would perhaps be better engaged, in producing habits of industry, and providing employment for those, already brought into existence by the plenty of food, and mildness of the climate, in parts where no manufactures exist; or in bringing that population to places where they can find employment; than in encouraging new generations in these latter places. In

short, Ireland does not, upon the whole, seem yet to have arrived at that pitch of improvement, either in habits, manners, civilization, or demand for labour, as not to leave a considerable surplus of people, (created by peculiar circumstances,) fully sufficient for such extraordinary demands, as may probably occur for some years *.

§. 8. But the Poor Laws, in this part of their operation, are here unnecessary, because their place is supplied by the plenty of potatoes, the absence of severe seasons, and the simple manners of the people. The first enabling them to rear large families with ease; the second to rear them in cabins, which in richer countries would scarcely deserve the names of habitations †; and the third preventing them from feeling wants,

* The author has however been informed, that of four regiments, for the raising of which in Ireland, letters of service were granted at the breaking out of this war to officers of great family interest there, three only could be completed. This is an insulated fact; but if many more of the same nature should occur, they would go far to contradict the conclusion stated in the text.

† These observations are meant to apply exclusively to the more wild, and uncivilized parts of Ireland; the western, and north-western districts.

which, were the comforts of life, as they exist in more civilized places, exposed to their observation, they could not avoid being affected by. So that there is every reason to believe, as civilization and industry are more widely spread throughout Ireland, (and let us hope that England will not be selfish, or niggardly in affording the means of their being so;) some legal provision for the poor may here likewise become necessary in point of policy.

§ 9. Those who agree in the opinions laid down in the second, and third chapters of this Inquiry, and are convinced of the policy of the Poor Laws, may yet perhaps hesitate, as to the expediency, and practicability of the means, humbly offered for their improvement in the foregoing chapters.

§ 10. Supposing the general good policy of the laws to be admitted, it is not apprehended that much difference of opinion can exist, with respect to the *expediency* of the greater part of the improvements suggested. It is humbly conceived by the author, to be established for the most part on such incontrovertible general grounds, that nothing he

can further say will add to their force; they are therefore left with all due deference, to the consideration of the public.

§ 11. But with respect to their practicability, a few more words may perhaps be necessary. It is admitted that such parts of the improvements suggested, as relate to the employment, management, and relief of the poor, would introduce considerable alterations in the present practice; must therefore clash with the usual routine of business; interfere with fixed habits, and prejudices, and perhaps with the interests of some few, who draw a plentiful harvest out of the public purse, by the uncertainty and inefficacy of the present system. It is natural likewise that those, who have grown old in the present practice, who have taken pains to inform themselves accurately of its various bearings, and intricacies; and who have thought their labour to be thereby concluded, should feel a reluctance to any innovation.

§ 12. If this constitute impracticability, no doubt the objection is established. But if, from a cool consideration of the measures proposed, there appear in them nothing in-

consistent with liberty, justice, industry, morality, the safety of the constitution, or with any other essential blessing, the endangering of which may fairly give a good, and honest citizen an utter aversion to lending any hand in their execution; if on the contrary they have a tendency to promote, and enlarge those blessings; it seems very certain that it is not the *measures proposed*, but *the minds of men*, that should be accused of being *impracticable*. And having reduced the objection to its proper bearing, nothing remains to render the improvements feasible, but the production of a general conviction on the minds of men, that they would be consulting their own true interests, in making a sacrifice of old habits and prejudices, in favour of a more eligible system. If the arguments in favour of such a system are irresistible, it seems only necessary to spread the general knowledge of those arguments as widely as possible, in order to produce such a conviction: for though many wrong-headed men do certainly exist in the world; and the pride a *freeborn Englishman* is apt to take in maintaining such opinions, as his humour, or caprice may dictate, does not render the number smaller here than else-

where; yet on great questions of politics, it has generally been found only necessary, to reduce the true line of policy to the level of the plain understanding of a man of common sense, in order to procure its general adoption, and support.

§ 13. This necessity of satisfying the public mind as to the degree of interest the people have in every public measure, is one of the firmest bonds of our liberty, and prosperity.

§ 14. The foregoing reasoning applies with the same force, to the equal distribution of the burthen of the poor's rate, throughout the property of the community. If the arguments in favour of the measure are such, as to produce a conviction upon the mind, that general and individual prosperity depends upon its adoption; and if those arguments were widely disseminated; there is reason to hope it would be finally embraced, and that every man would heartily lend a hand in its execution. It is, in the humble opinion of the author, the "*sine quâ non*," not only of the continuance of the laws, but of any hope, which the country may reasonably have, of a prosperous continuance to distant ages.

It is an improvement in the Poor Laws, in comparison of which all others are of trifling importance; since its neglect strikes at the very root of the means by which all others must be effected. It is as necessary to the free operation of those laws, as the restoration of a paralytic side is, to the free activity of the human body. There is certainly nothing essentially impracticable in any part of it; but as the immediate interests of a large number of persons would be *apt to stand in the way of conviction;* as it requires more patience than many possess, to follow, and give proper weight in their minds to the arguments, which prove the moral certainty of a future benefit, arising from the sacrifice of present advantages; it is very possible that the greatest pains taken to disseminate those, pointing out the true line of policy on this subject, may not secure its adoption, before the evil becomes too fatally glaring, without some little violence to the feelings, and wishes of that part of the community at present exempted.

§ 15. The power in the Legislature of imposing this violence, subject to the control of the people, after the lapse of a period of

years, sufficient to give them time to reflect upon the consequences; and to perceive the advantages secured to them by the better judgment of their representatives, against their own froward wills; is the strongest pledge of the continuance of our liberty; which would otherwise, by degenerating into licentiousness, at once destroy itself, and ruin the general prosperity.

§ 16. But one more argument seems now necessary to be noticed before the close of this work. It may be said, that though the reasoning used, and measures recommended in the course of it, may suit very well with our present situation, or as long as we continue increasing in prosperity; what would be the case in a reverse of fortune? In what manner would a redundant population prepared for a future demand operate, should that demand never arrive? If our commerce, and manufactures should be checked, excluded from the Continent by foreign rivalship, or violence; and from more distant markets by interference with our naval power; would not the population, so carefully cherished for these purposes, be

a dead weight upon the society, and become our weakness rather than our strength; since without employment we could not possibly maintain them to advantage?

§ 17. The author, being solely anxious for the discovery of truth, is far from wishing to represent his arguments as of more general application, than a strict examination of them will warrant. He is perfectly ready to admit, (as indeed he *has* more than once in the course of the work,) that, supposing the country *could exist* in such a retrograde state of society, the system of policy he has recommended would be altogether misplaced; that it is precisely for such a situation that the opposite system, (which he has humbly endeavoured to shew would be in its wrong place at present,) is peculiarly calculated. Not that, in this country, it would ever be necessary to apply any rigorous artificial checks to population; because the severity of the cold seasons, the freedom of the constitution, and the habits of the people, would of themselves produce a sufficient check, to prevent the more horrible ones of starving, child-murder, and others, which we are in-

formed take place in more genial climates, and more uncivilized societies *.

§ 18. But it requires no great degree of intuition to perceive, that in any situation in which Europe can possibly exist for some ages to come, the occurrence of such misfortunes as those enumerated in the last section but one, would not only introduce the inconveniences there stated, but would strike at the very root of our existence: that, supposing them possible, is supposing our

* An ingenious friend of the author's has favoured him with the following observations. "Tacitus, speaking of the manners of the Germans, says 'Numerum liberorum 'finire nefas.' If he means, that it was unlawful among that people to destroy their children, the practice must have been pretty general among the nations with which the Romans were acquainted, to have made the author think the absence of it, among those he was describing worthy of historical notice. The *want of the practice* in any nation would never be mentioned by a modern historian, the *existence of it* certainly would." This reasoning, which is very fair, seems to justify a supposition, that in the warmer climates of Europe, with which Tacitus was chiefly acquainted, child-murder might have been practised; but that in the colder and more northern situation of Germany, some cause existed, independent of the state of society, which prevented the necessity of the barbarous custom; which cause was probably the climate.

absolute ruin, and annihilation, as an independent power. It is supposing the enemy not only in possession of the immediate means of coming into contact with us, by the intervention of a superior navy, but likewise of the resources which alone can enable us hereafter to gather sufficient force financial and political, for resisting his aggressions, by the possession of our colonial markets, and the consequent exclusion of our ships and manufactures from them: and this after he has declared *, that he will make no peace with England, till he has deprived her of the means of disturbing the tranquillity of the Continent any more. That is, (to strip the sentence of the false jargon in which it is enveloped,) till we are reduced to such a state of financial, and political weakness, as not only to be unable to assist others in checking the career of his inordinate ambition; but, as a natural consequence, to afford ourselves an easy prey; and the last, but most grateful trophy to his triumph over the liberty, and independence of the civilized world.

* In a proclamation of Napoleon to his army in Germany the 28th Oct. 1806.

§ 19. In such a state of degradation, the addition of the evils arising from a redundant population, and decreasing demand for labour, would add but a drop in the cup of our misery. To throw away the advantages of that population now, for fear of its consequences in such a reverse, appears not less absurd, than to refuse the remedy which may cure an illness, for fear it should disfigure the corpse, supposing death to ensue.

§ 20. The only true criterion of the policy, or impolicy of the system recommended, seems to be this: Does it, or does it not tend to place us more upon a level with the natural power, and resources of the enemies and rivals, with whom we have to contend? If the population produced by the Poor Laws be a powerful engine, which, operated upon by our free constitution, and assisted by our geographical position, *absolutely forces us to be an industrious nation*, and consequently to possess those various resources, and extensive acquisitions, which our natural situation alone, without an extended industry, and redundant population, could never have procured; it is apprehended, that this their operation is fully suf-

ficient to endear them to every friend of his country; even though he may be convinced, that they might add to the weight of the fall, should Providence, notwithstanding our best exertions for preservation, decree that they shall yet be fruitless.

§ 21. We are not to suppose however, that any such decree has passed. The idea sometimes entertained, that the present head of the French Government is an instrument in the hands of Providence for some particular purpose, should be received with great caution. The utmost care should be taken not to confound it with any fatality in his destinies; which must have a decided tendency to paralyze the efforts it is every one's duty to make for his country, by the consideration, that what is decreed by Providence cannot be resisted.

§ 22. That that extraordinary man is the instrument, in the hands of his Maker, to punish selfishness, national cowardice, treachery, irregular and unprincipled ambition; we have seen by the ease, with which he has converted those bad passions, in the breasts of the various governments he has had to

contend with, to their mutual and alternate destruction. And what is this but an effect, on a large scale, of the ordinary operation of Divine Justice? which often punishes the guilty through the very instruments, by which they had promised themselves to reap the harvest of their crimes.

§ 23. But as we may hope, and indeed, considering the nature of our political institutions, may presume to assert, that no such imputations can attach to us, (at least in a national point of view;) there is no reason to suppose we shall be found such an easy prey. Nor would it deservedly incur the reproach of unreasonable confidence, to express an opinion, formed from the different condition of the virtues, morals, and political institutions of England, and its great rival, that the former is destined, (if true to itself, and active in taking advantage of the means bestowed for that purpose,) ultimately to triumph over the latter.

§ 24. Let this consideration then give us confidence; let us have recourse to no half-measures, which, in a contest with an enemy who scorns them, can only lead to destruc-

tion; but, by boldly seizing, and pressing to the utmost, all advantages that offer, let us look to them as our only stay! convinced that compromise is out of the question; and, as every manly mind must do, when that is the case, let us firmly resolve upon resistance, if necessary, to the very last hour of ruin. The height of boldness is in such a case the height of prudence.

§ 25. Let us throw aside party prejudices, and party feelings; that every man, willing and able to serve his country in this arduous crisis, may be placed in the situation best suited to his abilities. There is enough to do for all; and if contracted minds, and petty jealousies, are permitted to prevent our turning the talents given us to the best account, we shall not even deserve to be saved.

§ 26. Above all, let every class of society, and every individual in each class, cast away the narrow selfishness, that would confine advantages, which ought to expand themselves throughout the whole community, to their own particular order, or profession: since nothing can be more evident, than that

the prosperity of one part of the community, prosecuted at the expense of the other, cannot but ultimately tend to the ruin of both.

§ 27. By the practice of these virtues, we shall be able to make the most of our resources. And with due encouragement to the cultivation of thirty millions of acres, still untouched in the three kingdoms; upon which to raise food, and raw materials;

With manufactures, into which those raw materials may be wrought up, to any extent for which a demand may arise;

With a navy, to defend our own shores, and transport those manufactures to the important colonies, in all parts of the world, to which we must hereafter look, as the markets for the produce of our land and labour; and

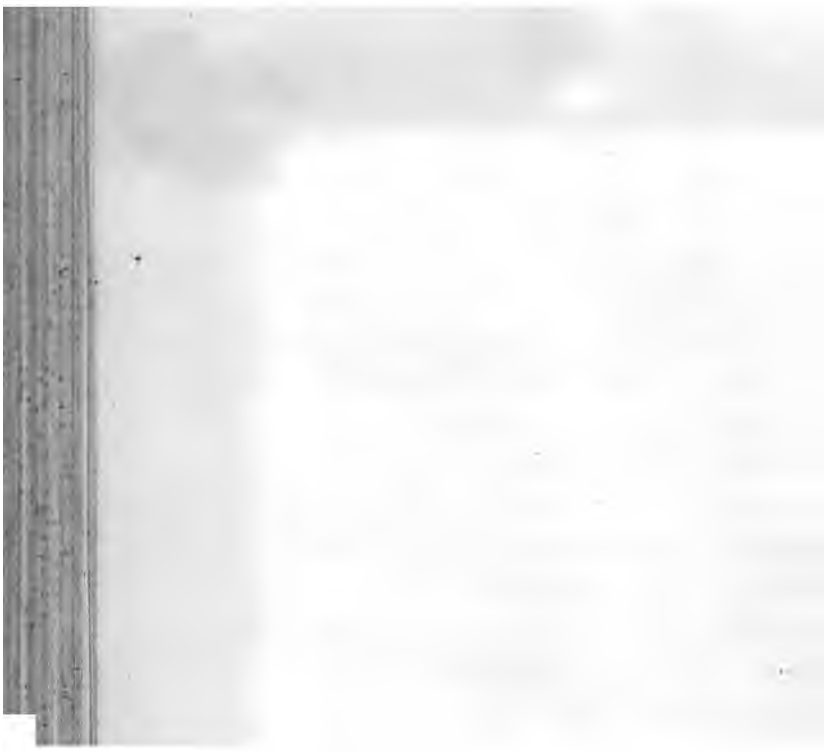
With the assistance of the Poor Laws, to keep up a redundant population always ready to seize, and make the most of such new resources as may offer;

The British empire may yet flourish to ages, when France, and its barbarous glories shall be forgotten; and the three United Kingdoms, compared with the nations of Europe, which have passed away in the last few centuries,

"Invictæ gentes se æterna in fœdera mittant."

THE END.

S. Gosnell, Printer, Little Queen Street.



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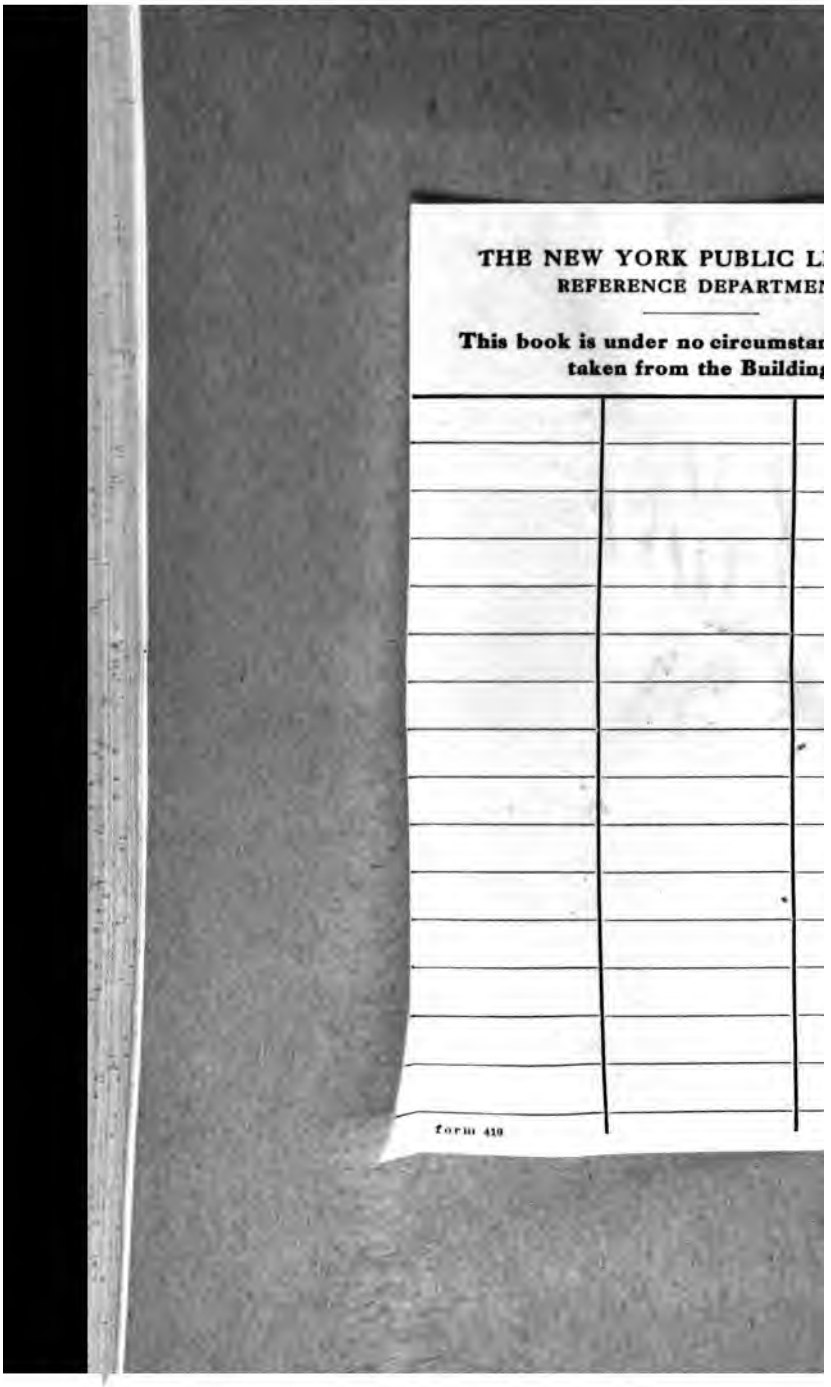
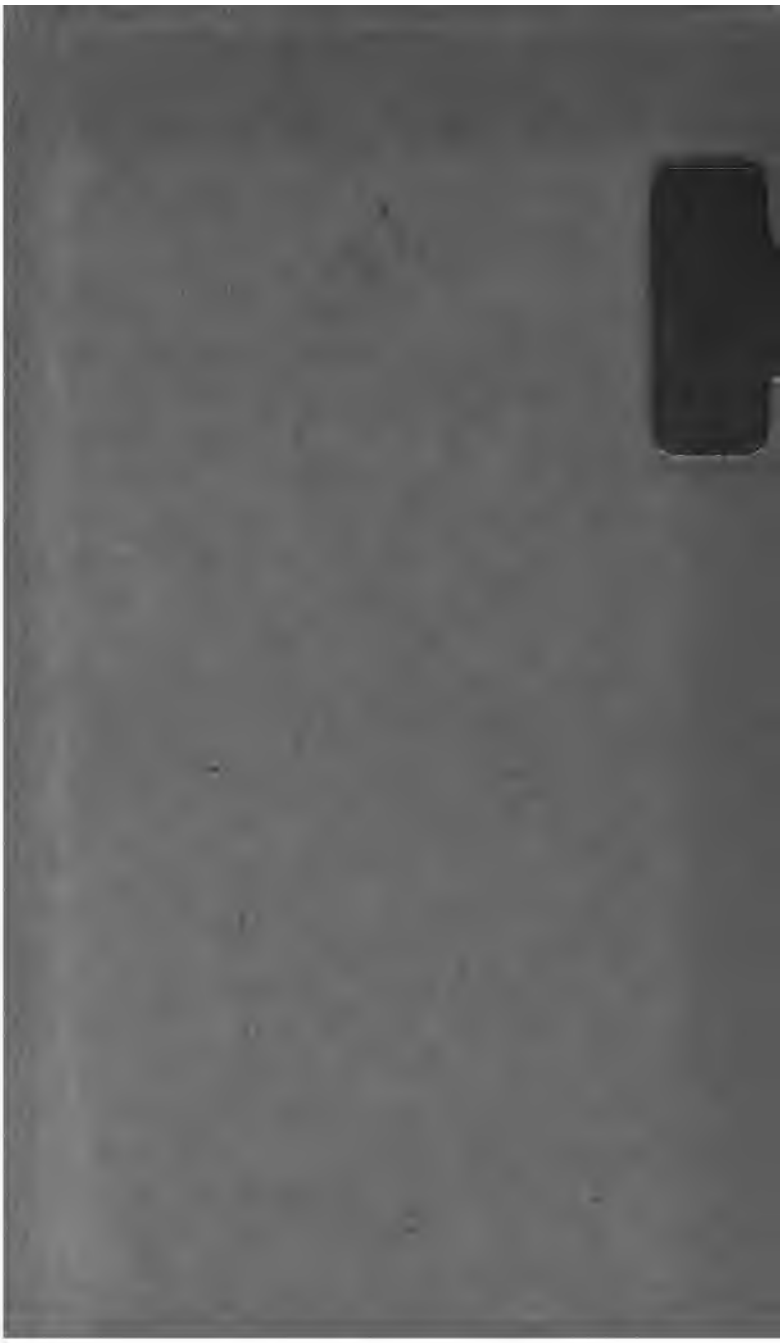
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